TEMPLE ENTRY MOVEMENT IN TAMIL NADU

Dr. A.SINGARAVEL

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TEMPLE ENTRY MOVEMENT IN TAMIL NADU IN THE 20th CENTURY

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WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

Centre For History

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25th January 2005

MESSAGE

I am happy to learn that the Centre for History is organising a National Workshop sponsored by the U.G.C. on "Temple Entry Movement in Tamil Nadu in the 20th Century". The topic has its own historical significance which can be traced back to pre-Independence days. The discrimination against the down-trodden and underprivileged even at the place of worship is perhaps one of the most cruel and inhuman activities. In the history of social reformation, there have been great social activists and thinkers who have struggled for the cause of temple entry of the untouchables for equality before God, leave alone equality before law. Notwithstanding their continued struggle, still there are several instances of discrimination and humiliation against the underprivileged, particularly in the rural and remote pockets where the feudal order and the caste hierarchy are intact. Hence, the temple entry movement continues to be a live issue in many places. The social conflicts arising out of forced temple entry by the so-called lower class people are becoming cause of social tension and animosity. The Government law has its limited currency in actual practice. Education of the masses and the right type of social awakening are the need of the hour. This workshop would serve that in part and purpose. I wish the co-ordinator of the workshop Dr.A.Singaravel all success in the endeavour..............................

C. Thangamuthu
(C. THANGAMUTHU)

EDITOR'S REPORT

Tamil Nadu has to its credit continuous written history for nearly 2500 years. Many scholars have worked ceaselessly in codifying this long history by a proper study of various source materials. Nevertheless there are still several missing links that remain to be picked up. Finding those links and writing a complete history of Tamils is a continuous process.

The theme of the book is an interesting area of the social and religious history of the Tamils. The traditional Tamil society has been compartmentalized on the basis of caste and religious considerations. The social stratification divided the people into privileged and unprivileged sections. Particularly, a two fold division, namely, Brahmins and non-Brahmins mainly characterize the Tamil Society. The religious knowledge and avocation also occupy a considerable place in these divisions. Under this unparalled experience, attainment of social equality was considered the stepping-stone for the gaining of civic and political rights. The Temple Entry agitation to a great extent was a culmination of the movement for the social transformation.

The awareness of caste segregation, religious disability and economic disparity among the majority of the Tamils in the 19th and 20th centuries engineered a broad based movement for social justice. The socio – religious reform movement at national and regional levels moulded social consciousness and emancipation among the oppressed people. Generally the temple is closely associated with the people and the temple entry was considered as the attainment of the highest social right of the oppressed people.

Great social thinkers like, Swami Ramalinga Adikal fought against the social disabilities. Following him, Harijans Sevak Sangh, The Self-Respect League, The Justice Party and the Congress had

contributed immensely towards elimination of some of those disabilities. Further due to the mass awakening and self realization, the Brahmin leaders like Vaithiyanatha Iyer, Rajaji, T.S.S. Rajan and others came forward to extend their constructive and consistent support to the temple entry for the Harijans. The statutory initiatives made the temples in Tamil Nadu thrown open to the depressed people after independence. The relentless and untired constructive efforts considerably helped to establish social justice in Tamil Nadu. However, there still exists certain social problems related to religion, which put obstacles in the way of realizing "**social justice**" in the fullest sense. The object of the workshop is to focus on this theme too. I hope the workshop will be intensive enough to draw upon the expertise of several highly recognized scholars on issues related to Temple Entry Movement. The workshop includes study, research and discussion on the theme to improve awareness, ability and understanding for a just social order.

This small book is the collection of research papers to be presented in the National Workshop titled **"Temple Entry Movement In Tamil Nadu In The 20th Century"** to be held on 28th and 29th January 2005 at Bharathidasan University. The papers included in this book cover various aspects of protest movements in general and Temple Entry in particular. The papers touch on many aspects of the related area of study to provoke ideas for study and research. All these papers are based on both the new findings and interpretation of the existing secondary literature in this field of study. I hope these papers will stimulate the interest of the young researchers and scholars of social sciences.

This endeavor would not have been successful but for the cooperation and enthusiasm shown by the Honourable Vice- Chancellor Dr.C. Thangamuthu. He has sanctioned UGC financial assistance and consistent encouragement to conduct this National Workshop.

I also thank the illustrious scholar, Dr. S. Muthukumaran, the former Vice-Chancellor of the Bharathidasan University and Member-Secretary, Tamil Nadu State Council for Higher Education, Chennai for his liberal and broad-minded support for this endeavor.

I am very grateful to our University Vice Chancellor for his foreword and readiness to agree to release the book. I thank the Dr. N. Rajendran, Head, Centre for History and Professors and scholars of various colleges and Universities to share their ideas through research papers with in the stipulated time. I convey my sincere thanks for their kind co-operation in this venture.

In preparing and bringing out this book, our department scholars including Mr.G. Rengaraju have worked tirelessly. I thank them for their sincerity. I take this opportunity to convey my sincere thanks to Dr. S. Venkatarajulu, Prof. Mohan Gnana Olivu, Dr. V. Ramasamy, Dr M. Lakshmanan, Dr. L. Selvamuthukumarasami and the Tirumalai Printers, Tiruchirappalli for their constructive help in bringing out this book in record time in such a fine shape.

Dr. A. Singaravel
Workshop Director

The Temple Administration in Vedaranyam Vedaranyesvarar Temple in Medieval Tamil Nadu

*Prof. Dr. S. Venkatarajulu**

Introduction

The South Indian temples, true to the saying of "No temple, No village" (Koil Illa ooril Kudiyirukka Vendam), acted in the medieval period of Tamil history as a center of spiritual as well as secular activities of the general public living around them. The temple, it is no exaggeration to say was indeed a symbol of a rudimentary experiment in the creation of a welfare state. It touched every facet of local life, political, social, economic and religious. It provided proper social environment and offered ample scope for self-improvement.

Village Administration

Tirumaraikkadu was a 'Perundevadana' village and entirely belonged to the temple of Vedaranyesvar. It did not have any corporate body like the village assembly such as the Sabha or Ur as were found in 'brahmadeya' or 'vellan-vagai' villages for the administration of the temple. Nevertheless, the affairs of the temple were carried on by groups of officials and others such as the 'stanattar' (trustees), 'Srikaryam Seyvar" (those in charge of management), 'devakanmis' (pujaris or priests), 'padipadamulattu panchacharyas' and the 'mahesvaras' (the Saiva congregation) subject to the supervision of the officers of the Central Government. The expression 'Padipadamulattup-pattudai panchacharya' would mean "a panchacharya who wears a silk garment in honour of the feet of the lord of the temple"[1].

An inscription in the temple of vedaranyesvar contains the expression 'Konerinmaikondan' as the title of a ruler[2]. The title 'Konerinmaikondan' can be read as Ko+ner+inmai+kondan' meaning "he who has assumed the title unequalled among kings". Generally this title applied to the Chola kings Rajaraja I in the large Leyden Grant (line 112) and Kulottunga Choladeva III and to the Pandya rulers Maravarman Sundara Pandya I, Vira Pandya and Maravarman Kulasekharadeva[3]. The inscription runs as "Tiribhuvanachakravartin Konerinmaikondan Dharanimuludaiya Valanadu". One of the queens of Rajaraja II (A.D. 1140-1163) was Dharanimuludaiyal. So the name

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Umbalanadu might have been changed into Dharanimuludaiya Valanadu during the time of Rajaraja II. Therefore the expression 'Konerinmaikondan' appearing along with the name Dharanimuludaiya Valanadu in the inscription must refer to kulottunga III (A.D. 1178-1218), the son of Rajaraja II. There is a reference to s surname "Tiribhuvanaviradevar[4], as applying to a Chola ruler. The ruler with that surname must be Kulottunga III as is borne out by one of his meykirtis[5]. He was also called as 'Chola-Pandya'.

Royal Patronage

The temple of Vedaranyesvar received patronage in innumerable ways from the officials of the realm. Of them, Rajarajamarayan was one. In the compound name 'Rajarajamarayan' (Rajaraja + Marayan), the first part would refer to the person named after Rajaraja I under whom that person with special title 'marayan' served. Rajarajamarayan was one of the army chiefs of Rajaraja I (A.D. 985 – 1014). He is said to have carried out a survey of the Chola Empire in A.D. 1001 on direction from the king. Hence he was also called as 'Ulagalandan Rajarajamarayan'[8].

An inscription of the time of Kulottunga III speaks of an official by name 'Gunamalaippadi Udaiyan Gangai Kondan Rajarajadevar' alias 'Pottappi Cholan' as having made a deposit of one hundred and fifty 'narkasu' for supply of ghee for a perpetual lamp (nontha vilakku) from out of its interest. He has been mentioned as 'Kottappicholan' in the inscription[9]. He was an officer in the Vennik-kurram in Suttamalli Valanadu of Cholamandalam. He was awarded the special title 'Pottappicholan' because of his military exploits in the Andhradesa. He created endowment for burning three perpetual lamps in the Kapardisvar shrine at Tiruvalanjuli[10].

One Munayadarayar has been referred to in an incription of the 6th regnal year of Rajendra Chola III (A.D.1246 – 1279) as a signatory to a transaction[11]. The person's real name was 'Munayar kon'. He was also called as Munaiyarayan. According to Vikrama Chola Ula, he was a minister of Vikrama Chola (A.D. 1118 – 1132)[12]. He has been mentioned in inscriptions at Tiruvarur and Koyilur[13]. The same inscription speaks of two officers named 'Vanadarayar' and 'Yadhavarayar'. The message the inscription conveys is that 'Yadhavarayar', a feudatory of the Chola ruler made a representation to the king (nayanar) that the income from the levy of textiles (Kuraitaragu ayam)[14] from the devadana lands should be assigned to the deity Tirumaraikkattu Udaiyar. Thereupon 'Vanadarayar' (an official of the king's government) issued an order

on behalf of the king granting the request of Yadhavarayar to the 'stanattar' of the temple for compliance. This episode shows the nature of the central supervision over temple affairs.

An officer of the king's government by name Ariyan Picchan alias Gangainadalvan has been referred to as a 'Merpadikaval' in an inscription[15]. He was a police officer of a high status in possession of the Padikavalkani of a whole nadu. The inscription speaks of him as selling two slaves to the temple. The Padikaval Officers used to remit the fee due from sacred property belonging to temples or requiring the temple authorities to burn lights or conduct festivals in the manner specified by him instead of paying the fee[16]. An inscription of the 13th regnal year of Parantaka I (A.D. 907-953) refers to a gift of ninety sheep for the maintenance of a perpetual lamp by one Nakkan Kalikesari, son of Sembiyan Karaikkadudaiyan[17]. The term 'nakkan' denotes a dancer[18]. An inscription in the Sivayoganathasvamin temple at Tiruvisalur[19] also speaks of one kalikesarin as the son of one Sembiyan Karaikkadudaiyan who is identified with one Vanakovarayar, a native of Karaikkadu[20]. The Vanakovarayars were the 'Padikaval' doing police duties in villages or nadus. Perhaps Karaikkadudaiyan held a higher status when compared to the ordinary Padikaval of the village.

There is a reference in an inscription to an officer of the King's government by name Amudhankanjan as having made arrangements after inspection for the supply of curd-rice to god Alvar from the income of the fields endowed to the temple by Siyavur Kadanaiyan and two others[21]. This officer has been refereed to as 'nadu seykinra'. He was a revenue official employed in the settlement of land revenue. He can be compared to the modern District Revenue Officer and his duty was to classify the lands on the basis of their fertility and assess them accordingly[22]. There is an inscription in the temple premises, which speaks of a successful military expedition to Sri Lanka of a Chola army under one Gunavan of Idaiyur during the 32nd regnal year of Parantaka I. This inscription is partly in verse and refers to Parantaka as "one who destroyed the fortified city of Madurai"[23]. On his way back to the capital, the army chief made a gift of 90 sheep for burning a perpetual lamp in the temple of Vedaranyesvar as an act of thanks giving.

The fact that there was a period of great confusion and chaos in the Chola country during the 25th regnal year of Rajaraja III (A.D. 1216 – 1256) is well attested by an inscription in the temple premises. It refers to the invasion of the region around Vedaranyam by one Singanna Dandanayaka, a Hoysala

army Chief[24] and the resultant stoppage of worship in the temple Tirukkodikulagar there. According to it, one Bhattan Nambi alias Uttaman Nambi undertook consecration of the temple of Tirukkodikkulagar after repair to structures therein at a cost of fifty thousand Kasus besides restoring daily rituals there. For this generosity, he was honoured with the title 'Pulavur talaivan'. The historical value of the inscription lies in the fact that it points to the deteriorating Chola power during the reign of Rajaraja III.

A very intriguing unpublished inscription of great historic value has been recently discovered by this in the course of his study. It is found on the exterior of the north -eastern part of the main shrine (inner Prakara) in the temple. It speaks of a gift of land during the 30th regnal year of "Kulottunga Chola-Pandisvara Thevar". This inscription recalls the practice introduced by Rajendra I (A.D. 1012 – 1044) of a new system of imparting administrative experiences to the princes of the royal family. The Chola princes appointed as viceroys of the pandya country styled themselves as "Chola-Pandyas"[25]. It also reminds one of the assumption of the title 'Chola Pandya' by Kulottunga III after his sack of Madurai following his victory over Jatavarman Kulasekhara Pandya in the battles of Mattiyur (Chaturvedimangalam, in the Tiruppattur Taluk of Sivagangai District) and Kalikkottai (not identifiable)[26].

Another unpublished inscription recently discovered by this researcher in the course of his study is found on the exterior of the southern part of the West Inner Prakara wall near the shrine of Virahatti Vinayakar. It relates to the period of Maravarman Kulasekhara Thevar (A.D. 1268-1308). It speaks of a gift of land made free of tax in the 10th regnal year of the king to the temple for supply of provisions. Much of the inscription is damaged. An inscription of the time of kulottunga III mentions an individual by name Pokkakudaiyar Iyarpagaiyandar of Marukalnadu as having made provision for buring two perpetual lamps in the tempel.It seems that the donor was named after the Saiva saint 'Iyarpagai' of Periyaapuranam fame.

There was two important officers of the King's Government by name Rajaraja Muvendavelan[27] and Karikalchola Pallavaraiyan[28]. The former made a gift of land made free of taxes fixed by the royal order (rajaniyogam) for a perpetual lamp. The latter and the 'Uravar' of Sirumuttarai jointly made a gift of ¾ veli of land made tax-free for food offerings to the deities Aludaiyar and Nayakar and their divine-consorts. These images were set up in the temple by one Andan Nayakan headman of Karaikkadaippu Elumur. Civic bodies like the 'Uravar'[29], the 'Sabha'[30], the 'Nagaram'[31], and the 'Nattar'[32], made gifts to the

temple of Vedaranyesvar either in kind or cash for burning of lamps, for food-offerings and the like.

Spiritual Merits

Temples in South India, it is needless to say representing the Tamil culture in all its facets. Pujas to the deities are conducted daily and festivals are held all round the year on auspicious occasions. The important festivals held in the temple of Vedaranyesvar in the medieval period as noticed in the inscriptions were Citrai Spring festival, Tiruvadirai, Masimagam, Sadaiyam and Sivaratri festivals. All these festivals continue to be held even to this day. 'Brahmotsavam' which was held for seven days[33] in the past is now held for eighteen days.

The devotees belonging to different walks of life made liberal donations either in cash or kind of sorts either as an act of piety or thanksgiving for favours bestowed on them by the grace of god or for the accrual of merit for their near and dear or as an act to attain "social eminence and public recognition". Out of the one hundred and six inscriptions so far found in the temple premises, fifty-eight concern gifts of sheep, land and cash for meeting the expenses of burning perpetual or half lamps in the shrine of Tirumaraikkattu Udaiyar. Burning of lamps in the shrines of a temple is an age-old practice followed even to this day without let-up. Lamps or 'deepas' are of two kinds those which were used for the ceremony of 'arati' (waving the lamp before the deity) and those that were kept burning before the images throughout day and night or day or night only, as a symbol as it were of the burning devotion of the donor.[34] Some of those lamps were artistically conceived in the form of a female figure holding the burner, the donor of the gift being suggested by the figure. These were known as far back as the first century of the Christian Ear.[35] It is to be noted that the practice of donating lamps to the temples was not exclusive to the Tamils alone in ancient times. It was also current in Ancient Greece. After the sack of Thebes, Alexander, the Great consecrated to Apollo, the Greek Sun-god at Cyme, a hanging lamp which Pliny describes.[36] The practice of bestowing gifts of lamps on the temples originated in the belief in spiritual efficacies to the donors of such endowments which are supported by texts of the Sastras in each case. For instance, the spiritual merits attached to the gifts of lamp to the temples are prescribed in various religious texts. Of the gifts of lamps to the temple, it is said that "there has been and there can be no better gifts than the gifts of lamps".[37]

The proximity of vedaranyam to kankesanturai in the Jaffna Peninsular of Sri Lanka had been facilitating since time immemorial cultural as well as commercial intercourse between the Tamil-speaking people on both sides of the Palk Straits till independence. The presence of numerous inscriptions containing names of Sri Lankan Tamils who patronized the temple in one way of the other and the fact of a member of the Varani Adheenam in Jaffna being the Managing Trustee of the temple bear testimony to the cultural interaction between Tamils of the regions of Jaffna and Vedaranyam. After independence, the movement of people and merchandise across the Palk straits both ways was curtailed appreciably and at present such movement or traffic has become a thing of the past. The impact of the temple of Vedaranyesvar on the Tamils of Jaffna region is such as to make some of them name their children as 'Virahatti' after Virahatti Vinayakar in the temple. One Professor by name Virahatti worked for some years in the Tamil University, Thanjavur until a year ago.[38] The present 'pudu theru' in Vedaranyam until a few years ago was called 'Yalpanatheru'.

Conclusion

In the fore-going paragraphs a detailed account of the political, social, economic and cultural life of the people as described in the inscriptions of the temple of Vedaranyesvar has been given. At present, the financial position of the temple is far from satisfactory since the tenants are not prompt in paying their rents. The temple in spite of so many trials and tribulations still exercises a great influence on the cultural and spiritual life of the society in the locality and its neighborhood. It stands as a living representative of the cultural heritage of the Tamils and symbolizes what is best in the field of civilization.

End Notes

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Temple-A Symbol Of Tamil Culture

V. Saminathan*
A. Chinnathambi*

The purpose of the paper is to highlight the temple as a symbol of Tamil culture. Temples in South India, it is needless to say, represent the Tamil culture in all its faccts. Tamil Nadu is a land of temples. The temples of Tamilnadu are of great antiquity. The Nayanmars of Saivisam and Alvars of Vaishnavam, who sponsored the Bhakti movement among the masses and the classes, toured far and wide, and sanctified hundreds of temples in Tamilnadu by their sacred songs.

The word "alaya", means a temple, signifying derivatively the idea of "all round absorption of mind."[1] Temples and images are the stronghold of our philosophy and religion. "Alaya pravesam" means not simply stepping into the inner chamber of the temple but entering into a state of all round absorption and communion. Above all, it should not be forgotten that temples are only adjuncts to religious faith and aids to enter into the inner temple of the heart wherein resides the supreme spirit.[2] Tamil koil is the home of the Lord of life, that is god. It may be noted that koil originally means the palace of the king.[3] Temple comes from the Latin term "Templum."[4]It is a place where Deivam –God, is present in spirit. In France, a protestant church is called temple. It is a house of God or a place of worship.

These temples are held in great respect and reverence by all people and attract thousands of pilgrims even today from all parts of Tamilnadu. The architectural beauty, the sculptural splendour and the massive buildings such as gopuram, vimanam, mantapam etc. of these temples, strike us with wonder and admiration. The mere sight of these temples are heart – thrilling and soul inspiring.[5] They purify our mind, elevate our thought and sublimate our very life. We forget ourselves, get rid of worldly worries and derive much spiritual solace and peace, by offering worship in these sacred shrines. The artistic mentality of man made images for these several god-heads and their forces and built temple to adore them. Temple culture developed and facilitated life around it, a life consecrated to god and his manifestation in human life and entity. Nayanmars came to revive God consciousness and devotion in mankind from time to time. Appar, Sambandar, Sundarar, Manikkavasagar, Pattinathar, Tayumanavar and the galaxy of saints came before mankind to remind them of the omnipresence

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and omnipotence of God and called humanity for united living in God consciousness.[6]

They raised temples in which men and women can quietly meditate on God, think of God and surrender their soul for the love of God. Temple is the rendezvous for all that is best and holy in the human being-his art, beauty, poetry, heart's fervour, charitable tendency, self giving and self-sacrifice. Temples were built in such a way that they can charge devotees with the divine energy as one stands with fervent love before the sanctum.[7]

Built and richly endowed by kings, princes and princesses of the dynasties that ruled over Tamil Nadu, the temples stand as a permanent monument not only to their piety and ardent spirit of service in the cause of religion but also to the development of a cultural tradition. The temple became the vital center of communal life and activities and upon it depended a numerous class of artists and artisans, architects and sculptors, bronze smiths, potters, musicians and poets, a hierarchy of priests and servants and peasants. Its treasury served as rural bank and doled out relief in time of distress.[8]

Temples serve the purpose of teaching the people who go there to offer worship, the grand principle that all that is in cosmos can be seen in a human being. Tirumular has stated that a human being is a walking temple.[9] The universe is a temple of God where he resides and the human body is only the universe on a miniature scale. In a special sense, therefore, a human being is also the temple of God. Temples enable all people to understand this grand principle and benefit themselves as much as possible by understanding it.

The temple being the symbolic representation of the body, the general pattern of its structure remains the same throughout the country and the various parts of the temple correspond to the various parts, principles, or secret centers of the body in a person. The temple thus shines as a replica of the divine possibilities in man.[10]

In ancient times, the temples were the busiest part of the village and the life of the community was centred upon the routine of the temple. They become not only places of worship but also the very center of the entire life of the village. The temple served the purpose of fortresses, treasuries, court houses, parks, fairs, exhibition sheds, hall of learning and of pleasure, all in one."[11] In some temples, dances and music were arranged. Festivals held throughout the

year provided an opportunity for the people to congregate and do communal work. Educational institutions were also organized in the temples. In various ways, they provided themselves to be agents of relief to the poor. They played the unique role of landholders, consumers of goods and services and of employers. Thus the temple in our country is a unique institution the like of which is not seen anywhere in the world.[12] In short, it is the very hub of activity around which the life of the community is built. It is the center of cultural, social and educational activity.

God, according to Hindu religion, has several forms and cosmic functions and each form is made to function as a symbol that can be understood both by the ordinary as well as the enlightened persons. Various Gods and Goddesses have thus come to be worshipped in temples. The symbol of each God or Goddess may be considered as conventional but the fact remains that its cosmic function is an unassailable truth.

Idol worship cannot be considered defective or meaningless. Latest scientific theories indicate that a devotee's soul gets attuned to the proper wavelength in ether and recaptures and experiences the intensity of spirituality that is ever present around the idols. As sound, that is once created never dies, the hymns rendered by great saints, while paying their obeisance before the idols, remains immortal by divine grace. It is to preserve these sound waves that the sanctum of temples are so clearly built. According to this view, nayanmars are able to perceive God in the idols, which virtually spoke and communicated with them.[13]

Idol worship is indeed a boon to the weak minded people who require something concrete and tangible to cling to and worship. It is, therefore, an invaluable aid to the devotees both literate and illiterate to rise from the visible to the invisible, to understand and grasp it and ultimately realize it. Thus we may conclude that the idol worship is an ideal stepping stone to attain this final beatitude.[14]

The mutts become an adjunct to the temple and often are called 'talis' in former times and 'malikais' in medieval times and mutts and 'caves' in later times. These mutts, consisting of learned saints like Tirumalikai-t-tevar whose hymns are included in the Saivite canonical literature had a great appeal to the popular imagination. They were not only disseminating religious knowledge, generally serving the purpose of a universality, but were also multipurpose so

cial centers- a kind of hospitals, poor house and advisory body. These mutts correspond to the viharas of the Buddhist and monastries of the jains. Endowments for all these purposes poured in from the people and the kings.[15] The popular appeal of the ascetic ideal created a religious climate which made these mutts an influence in the state and society. These mutts multiplied especially after Rajaraja and Rajendra. The various santanas developed subordinate mutts or Santana in addition to the main line. The history of these mutts is in a sense the history of the various sects and their various branches give us a picture also of the variety of saivite sects and also the cultural history of Tamils.[16]

Rituals represent the practical aspect of the religion concerned. Ritual is the concrete shape of faith with regard to various conception of religion. All theoretical aspects of religions are out and out psychological. They need to be translated to concrete action for purposes of successful demonstration and self-inspiration. Rituals come handy for achieving these twin aims.[17]

Rituals may vary from people to people and from time to time, yet they have their own significance and value. They are in fact, inescapable. For a thinker, prayer, prostration, chanting of hymns, refection or meditation etc. are also rituals. Rituals originated from the very dawn of religion and they are sustained intact even to this day. The first man who felt about the power exterior to him wanted to have contact with the unseen power. To achieve this aim, he adopted rituals. In course of time, human civilization advanced. Correspondingly rituals also increased in elaborate fashion consistent with prevailing external facilities. The necessity of rituals in day-to-day life (both religious and secular) is undeniable and indispensable. Even advanced philosophical thinking admitted the importance of rituals. [18]

According to the Agamas, in the categories of puja, there are three classifications. They are

1. Atmartha puja or mental worship
2. parartha puja or ritualistic worship and
3. kamiya puja or worship for the fulfillment of a desire.[19]

Pujas to the deities are conducted daily and festivals are held all round the year. The important festivals are held in the temple of Tamil Nadu.

Tamil Nadu is a land of festivals as it is a land of temples. Festivals are observed by people not only in temple but also in the their houses. Festivals are

fountains of joy for all. They are universal. They exist in all countries at all levels of society, in all races, and have been existing all through the ages. If man has been described as a social animal, festivals are the occasions for a close joyous coming together for the members of the social group and they give full expression to the social instinct. "The sanctity of certain moments and periods of time by association with memorable events, holy persons, and notable psychic experience is the basic idea underlying the observance of sacred days and festivals".[20]

The medieval period as well as the modern period have witnessed citrai spring festival, Thiruvathirai, Masi Magam, Sataiyam and sivaratri festivals.[21]

To say that the temples have for centuries promoted the communal life in Tamil Nadu is to depict but one aspect of its appeal to the people. The other and more significant aspect lies in the way it promotes the spiritual side. From the moment the worshipper enters its portals, and while passing through its mandapam and corridors, he is subjected to manifold experience, till finally he stands face to face with divinity in the sanctum which correspondents to the cave of his heart, where he can join with the eternal soul. Every ritual, every festival and every sculptural piece has a message and it is intimation to divinity.

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The Demand For Social Equality In The Christian Church At Vadakkankulam

Dr. A.V. Perumal*

Sex, Property and Religion are among the Chief determining factors in History, because by Sex we create life, by property we maintain life and by religion or ideology we are dreaming of the life to come. Foot-prints on the sands of time by religion have contributed to marvelous achievements in art and architecture. But the other side of the religious land-scape should not be ignored. Across centuries of despotism and dogma we find the poison cup, the cross and the torture chamber. Political use of religion and religious use of the political have contributed towards untold miseries. But in Vadakkankulam, in Tirunelveli District the impact of Hinduism on the converted Roman Catholics led to the demand for Social equality. The Roman Catholic Church was applying the brake as well as the accelerator simultaneously.

Vadakkankulam is situated in the Radhapuram Taluk of the Tirunelveli District. It is called Little Rome inview of the presence of Catholic Churches and Institutions. On 14.5.1745 at Neelappallai one of the officers of Travancore army was baptized and given the Christian name Lazar alias Devasahayam Pillai. His activities are irksome to the then Travancore state pursuing Anti-Christian attitude. He was shot Dead in the Karradi hills at Arambloy.[1]

Catholic Church blessed him as a martyr.[2] Earlier in 1685 De-Britto constructed prayer hall as promised to one Santhayee a pious Woman from Nadar Community. The event led to the migration of Nadars from adjoining places.[3] In 1743 one Chidambaram Pillai belonging to high caste Vellala was baptized by Fr Buttari in Vadakkankulam. Jesuit Fathers consider this event (conversion of high caste Hindu Vellala) as one of the wonders of the age.[4]

Fr Buttari, the parish priest appointed him as his assistant. He was given shelter. Vadakkankulam was included in the diocese of Goa, Cochin, Madurai, Nemam, Kodungelore, Pandichery, Trichy and Tuticorin in different times.[5] Vadakkankulam remained as a thorn in the heart of Roman Catholic Church. Social Discrimination of the Nadar Christians by the Vellala Christians, claims and counter claims as to their place and role in ecclesiastical ac

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tivities, the Question of status, rule making and rule adjudicating roles etc led to the construction and destruction of the partition wall separating the high and Low Caste Indians on 22.11.1910 and to costly litigation. Finally the Madras High Court upheld the claims of the Nadars.

Great winds of change were blowing in India. But Vadakkankulam remained as an isolated island. The Tsunami waves of Social equality were considered as a great challenge to Vellala prestige.

Many Movements and Reformers like St Ramalingar, Vaikundeswaringal, Rajaram Mohan Rai and his Brahmasamaj, Prarthana Samaj, Young Bengal movement, Ishwara chandra vidyasagar, Sastri Jambekar, Gyan prasarak Mandeli, Parama hansa Mandeli, Satyasodak Samaj and Jyotiba Phule, Gopalahari Deshmuk Lokahitawadi, Gopal Gansha Agarkar, Service league of N.M.Joshi, Ramakrishna movement, Dayananda Saraswathi of Arya Samaj Sevasadan, Devasamaj at Lahore, Bharat Darma Mahamandele, Radha Swami Movement, Shri Narayana Guru Dharma Paripalana Yogam, Vokkaliga Sangam, Justice party, Self Respect movement, Temple entry movement, Indian Social conference of Ranade, Wahabi movement of Sha Valiyulla, the Movement of Mir Nathar Ali, Faraizi Movement, Ahamadia movement, Sir Syed Ahamad Khan and Aligar movement, Deobond School, Parsi Reform movements Singh Sabha of Akali, Theosophical Movement, and the great Periyar E.V.R, Kandukuri Virasalingam Pantalu were creating tremors in the Social Landscape.[6] Just before and after the Destruction of partition wall in Vadakkankulam Church. Some of the major limitations of these religious reform movement were creation of narrow Social base among the educated and urban middle classes, ignoring the needs of the vast mases of Peasantry, relying on scriptural authority, an over emplasis on the religion and Philosophical aspects at the expense of Art, Architecture, Literature, Music, Science and economics, exaltation of the past, obiviously not liked by the Lower Caste.

But Nadars of Vadakkankulam through hard work and savings came to possess small bits of land. Through money orders they began to send their overseas remitence's to their kith and kin. Enlightened Fathers like Fr Kausanal also supported them. Profit was earned through Trade and knowledge gained through western education. By this, they successfully challenged Vellala hegemony. Finally the Madras High Court came to their rescue.[7]

It held that under the rules of the Canon Law which must govern the matter, the Bishop's authority (Subject to control from higher Church authori

ties) was supreme and the plaintiffs-Vellalar could not question it.
Per Napies.J : The right claimed is inadmissible as a customary right, a right of that character being unknown to law.

Per Curiam : Church buildings as soon as they are consecrated become vested in the Pope for the worship of God according to the tenets of the Roman Catholic Church and no Bishop can bind the Church or his own successor by any agreement of his relating to Church property.

Per Napier. J : The Canon Law is the sole guiding authority. The rules binding on the congregation as members of the Roman Catholic Church and the congregation of a particular locality cannot by an agreement between themselves seek to derogate from the authority of the rules of the Church as conferred by that law.

Per Sadasiva Aiyar.J : Castes as distinct corporations in the way in which they are understood among Hindus, cannot be recognized among Christians and as such an agreement purporting to be between two castes can be binding only on the actual parties to the agreement.

Second appeal against the decree of the District Court of Tinnevelly in Appeal Suit No.89 of 1913, preferred against the decree of the Court of the Subordinate Judge of Tinnevelly in Original Suit No.62 of 1910.

T. Rangachariar, V.S.Govindacharian and V.S.Kallabhiam Aiyanagar for Appellants.

W. Barton for Respondents.

Even after the Destruction of partition wall, Social discrimination is still visible. Caste is too powerful. Tamil Muslims are converts from Hinduism to Islam. They have successfully to a great extent stamped out the Social heresy of caste. It is because of their highly power local organization called Jamat which performed the rule making and rule adjudicating functions. The differences between Maraicar, Rowthar and Pattanis are distinctions without difference. Jamats are horizontally linked. But Church Bureaucracy is vertical. The approach of the Church may be a Binocular approach accepting caste as a social Reality and anticipating the time for its destruction. The approach of the Muslim is Microscopic in isolating and eradicating any hang over of any other religion.

If winter comes can spiring be for behind?

In the midst of life, death persists and in the midst of scientific revolutions obscurantism persists and in the midst of universalist humanism narrow fanaticism persists. A paradoxical behavioural pattern is witnessed in India. Some are personally deeply religious but do not mix their religious beliefs with the public, political life, while some others who may be highly modernistic and even atheistic in their private lives use religious ideology to promote their political goals. Thus the phenomenon of communalism is a political ideology which uses the religious emotions of the common people and exploits their ignorance and preaches hatred of other communities in order to capitalise on such pressure tactics.[8]

Whatever might have been the justification for the use of religious symbols in the semi-feudal era, their use in contemporary politics has no justification, since they have the seeds of exclusivism that would take root in the body politics. Along with the struggle for economic rights, the struggle for social and cultural change must also be waged so that in the minds of men mutual hatred does not get generated. It is too simplistic to declare in a Marxist fashion that once economic emancipation is achieved, all these superstions and hatred of other communities would disappear. Historically this has not happened. Human consciousness does play an important role sometimes independent of the material conditions. It has an autonomy of its own. Hence the struggle is simultaneously to be waged for economic as well as social emancipation.[9]

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Transition From Folk To Citizen -A Case study of Temple Entry Movement

Prof. Mohan Gnanaolivu*

Nadars, now occupying command position in our economic world, were not always fortunate. At one time they suffered a condemnatory position thanks to their lowly social pecking order. No wonder they were barred from entry into temples. To understand their historical position, one must take a critical look at the concept of temple in the pre-modern period.

A temple in the pre-modern period was not simply a religious institution. It was a socio-political institution also. The king was accepted as king thanks to the legitimising role of the temple priesthood which was basically brahminical in character. The temple also legitimized the social ordering and it was against this background that temple entry by a debarred community triggered a major development of eventful proportions.

Temples were of two kinds. Village level temples mostly catered to community – specific votaries and each community had an ISHTADEV of its own choice. Nadars also had their own small temples dedicated to their own Ishtadeivam. There was no bar on this category of Nadar-specific temples because there temples under the Little Tradition were accommodated in the Hindu polity. This folk tradition of worshipping Ishadadevas developed an insular and self-sufficient world view and these emotionally satisfying habits of the Little Tradition did not open the way for modern development of citizenship in a national polity.

When Nadars cultivated the habits necessary for promoting themselves as leaders in the emerging economic scenario, they adopted an ethics similar to the weberian concept of Protestant Ethics which promoted capitalism in the west. These nascent capitalists, having conquered the economic world through modern ethos, now attempted to apply the same world view of individualism to the religious practices of the day. Naturally, the traditional bar on temple entry was not acceptable to the emerging PARADIGM OF ACHIEVEMENT.

The modern order emerging at that time was based on citizenship, which valorised the inherent dignity of the human person. This achievement – ori

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ented modern order could not accept the ascriptive – oriented selective bar on entry into temples. While the delta areas were appropriated by the upper castes, the red soil area was left to the Nadars who occupied the lowest pecking order in the traditional social arrangement. But the Nadars planted chilly and other cash crops. They did not stop with cultivation.

They organized themselves to carry their produce to markets far away from home. While protestant ethics bound the early capitalists in Europe, a similar ethics rooted in the concept of Nadar community, helped them to form viable groups and indulge in trading practices. The Nadars thus created the nucleus for early capitalism in Tamil Nadu. It was this launching into the road for capitalism that geared them up for the protest movement called Temple Entry Movement. The Christians of Europe considered each other as brothers and this fellowship reassured them to the extent necessary for creating the joint – stock company which is the nucleus of capitalism. A similar generative concept is found in the Nadar community which paved the way for facilitating the emergence of Nadars as the capitalists of the Indian variety.

The birth of Nadars as capitalists helped them to don an entirely different Weltanschauung (world view). The new value orientation prepared them to move from the uncomplicated and the programmed world of folk into the tension – ridden world of citizen, member of an emerging modern political system. Since a citizen is entitled to all the good things on display in a political system, the Nadars looked at the entry of Agama temples as part of their citizenship.

History is what one age finds significant in another age. No wonder there is a tendency on the part of modern chroniclers to consider temple entry movement as a permanent blot on the Hindu polity of yore. This is far from the truth because the Temple Entry Movement was only the birth pangs of a new society. All birth phenomena are messy and temple entry movement was no exception.

While historians are content with the chronicling of the event of temple entry movement as a concrete phenomenon, political analysts and sociological thinkers would like to fathom the factors which triggered the movement. Marxian analysts understand any historical occurrence through the eyes of dialectical process. From the Marxian perspective, the Nadars as the proletariate were trying to supplant the supremacy of the upper castes and assert their role in the emerging social arrangement. But the Nadar community was not driven by the revolutionary consciousness of the Marxian discourse. Rather they were working from within the Agamic scheme of things in order to REINVENT THE TEMPLE and RE-WRITE ITS SYMBOLIC ORIENTATION.

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Framework For Social Awakening

Dr. A. Singaravel*

Introduction

The socio-political movement were mainly responsible for the social awakening and transformation among the people of Tamil Nadu. As a prelude to the social awakening, the rise and growth of political consciousness, the introduction of Western education, the judicial system, the administrative measures for the reorganization of society had paved the way for the rise of a new middle class. However some of the associations like the Zamindars Association, The Bengal British India Society of 1843, The British India Association of 1851, The Bombay Association of 1852 were largely held responsible for the social awakening. Initially these groups consolidated itself into political associations in the caste-based society. The caste-Hindus who formed a predominant social group in the state along with the depressed section worked against the Brahminocracy. It resulted in the rise and growth of the non-brahmin movement. Though the movements forged ahead on parallel line, ultimately helped the emergence of new trends, where the people attained social awakening.

Spread of Western Education

The socio-political awakening in Tamil Nadu was mainly due to the introduction and spread of Western education; It initiated an awakening among the people through administrative measures, missionary and voluntary enterprises. The earliest educational system known as **Gurukula** system was beneficial mainly to the upper caste-Hindus. When the English East India Company was in power, it introduced an educational system based upon the west. The efforts of some of the civil officers of the company, the activities of the Christian missionaries and the rise of a new consciousness among the enlightened Indians prepared the ground in favour of Western education. The East India Company came forward to impart native education as per the Charter Act of 1813, and a sum of not less than one lakh of rupees was allotted to promote scientific knowledge. The Minutes of Macaulay directly put an end to the native system of education with the help of the native reformer, Raja Rammohan Roy in 1835, heralding English education and thereby replacing Sanskrit. The western education united the Indians to some extent and promoted the growth of national awakening in India and increased communication activities between

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the people of different regions of India. The introduction of English education promoted a close association among the southern people of the Tamils, the Malayalees and the Kanadikas, which in turn, contributed to an alignment of a cultural and Dravidian affinity. Thus, English language helped to cut across the linguistic barriers and served a lingua-franca for the multi-lingual people of South India. It also helped the elites of South India to discuss the common problems relating to the political developments, social emancipation and awareness among the rural people[3]. They studied the history of the French Revolution and the history of modern governments, which in turn, generated the ideas of democratic value for constitutional reforms in their own countries.

Christian Missionaries and Voluntary Agencies

Besides the elite section of the people, the Christian missionaries played a vital role for the awakening and transformation of the society. The Charter Act of 1813 freely allowed the Christian missionaries to enter the various activities for modernizing the South Indian society. They conducted the meetings at the premises of district headquarters under the patronage of the collectors and discussed the problems relating to social degradation and evil practices. The association of the people with the missionaries helped them to read and study the literary works of the missionaries on castes, Hindu manners, customs and ceremonies, and agricultural bondage in south India in the nineteenth century, parayas and the land, The Wrongs of the Parayas, Panchama's education, the Shanars of Tinnevelly and Castes and tribes of Southern India. Further the works of Christian writers and their missionary activities analysed the Indian problems in detail and exposed the prevailing discriminative social set up[4].

In addition some of the texts were also compiled with the assistance of Indians. Grammar books, dictionaries in English and vernacular languages were highly valuable for the emerging middle class. Further, the Christian sundry publications such as the Madras Mail, The Harvest Field, International Review of Missions, The Madras Christian College Magazine, The Foreign Field, Kingdom Overseas etc. extended the knowledge on the socio-economic and political problems of the caste-ridden society in Tamilnadu[5]. The people who read them condemned the Hindu superstitions and social practices based on Manu dharma and thereby cultivated a sense of self-respect and self-consciousness. They clearly proved the fact that the works of the missionaries touched the sense of the downtrodden people and created new outlook.

The Christian missionaries were the first and foremost in encouraging the educational activities in Tamilnadu. In 1873 John Anderson, a missionary of the Church of Scotland opened at George Town in Madras, a school known as General Assembly School which later developed into Madras Christian College. In 1841 Elphinstone, the Governor of Madras, opened the high school of Madras where education of an advanced nature was imparted. This school later developed into the Madras Presidency College. With the formation of universities and vernacular schools on the basis of Charles Wood's Despatch of 11th July 1854, the missionaries actively entered into the field of education. They also understood that education was one of the fields where the spade work could be done to improve the condition of the backward people[6]. As a first step, they attempted to provide social rights to them in the caste-ridden society. Initially they recruited the socially degraded and condemned men and women of the Hindu society in their houses as domestic servants and in other jobs, which gave them a close association. They freely allowed the poor and illiterate men to approach them and treated them on par with the high caste people.

The advocates of Christianity served the poor people even during the natural disasters like famines and droughts, which hit Tamil Nadu between 1865 and 1880. The Christian Mission Society, London Mission Society, Young Men's Christian Association and Anglo-Indian Association of Southern India vigorously preached their new socio-religious philosophy of equality, liberty and fraternity[7]. They rendered valuable service by influencing public opinion against social abuses like degradation of women and custom. They initiated number of Shanars, Panchamas and other deprived sections of society[8]. The missionaries did a lot for the poor land labourers, bonded serfs and helpless victims who were nurtured in bad circumstances. As a result, the poor and the destitute, acquired a new dignity, instead of being dirty, dishonest, drunken and immoral. They slowly became worthy members of the society, acquiring a new sense of human dignity. Colonies were laid for them, where they lived freely and fearlessly. Welfare schemes were extended to the non-Christians too and also universal brotherhood was shown practically to them. Their kind touch and cheerful service gave hope to the hopeless lives, and led them to the path of progress. The constant criticism of the missionaries against casteism, Brahminism and puranism did the orthodox Hindu elites change their attitude not only ideologically but also practically in removing the social barriers and the social evils. Appreciating the works of Christian missionaries, T.V. Seshagiri Iyer, a high caste-Hindu himself remarked: "He was not concerned with their endeavours to gain converts. The works of foreign missions also awakened the educated

classes of India. It made them realize that they would lose ground of integration if they neglect the untouchable classes."

Thus the agencies of Christian faith by giving basic necessities educated the bottomline people. The gradual development among the backward classes, made them embrace Christianity, where they experienced love and respect. Their number, in due course exceeded that of the Brahmins or the hereditary scholars. In women's education the Indian Christians went ahead of all of them. Although they contended that the intellectual charter had laid great emphasis on the principle of 'equalitarianism', it did not reach all sections, especially the backward classes. Therefore, they urged the government to make educational institutions accessible to all classes irrespective of castes. On account of their persistent demands, the government schools were thrown open to all[10].

Further, the British government in 1890's made primary education free for all and came forward to render scholarships, stipends and other forms of material support to the children belonging to the backward sections during the training periods. The Madras Government reported that in 1901 those who studied in middle schools, high schools and colleges were mostly Christian students belonging to the poorer sections. By 1910 their position further improved in the districts of Madras, Madurai, Coimbatore and Tirunelveli and literacy rate of the depressed class was increased considerably.

Excluding the Christian missionaries, many voluntary agencies and energetic sympathizers did good services in the field of education to rescue the socially backward people from the darkness of illiteracy. In this endeavour, John Rathinam of Madras, between 1886 and 1889, established three elementary schools, a middle school, and a student hostel in Madras city. Col. Olcott, the founder of ***Theosophical Society*** strongly believed that education is the evident panacea for all social disorders and rendered great service in disseminating knowledge to those at the bottom of the society. As a result, five schools came into being in Madras, collectively known as '***Olcott Panchama Free Schools***'. These elementary schools excelled all other ordinary schools. In addition to the above schools, one Chellappa Mestri established an Anglo-Vernacular School at Marikuppam. In the same year, another person M.Y. Murugesan established two schools-one at Marikuppam and the other at Champion Reffs. In 1907 the depressed class people of Madras Presidency established a school

and library in Cantonment Bangalore [11]. In 1911 Swami Sahajanandam, an untouchable saint and a highly cultured Sadhu started a primary school at Chidambaram under the name of Saint Nandanar School and in 1916 inaugurated the Nandanar Educational Society. The society had its branches in eight villages around Chidambaram and created an awakening regarding the rights and privileges offered by the Government to the helpless people[12].

Progressive Measures of the British

The human minded organizations brought to some extent the neglected section of the society on equal with the people of other high castes. Even afterwards, the British Government, by taking drastic measures, tried its best to redeem the people from the shackles of caste system, age old customs and religious practices. In this context the government undertook progressive measures to widen their knowledge and to provide opportunities for them to stride into a new society, which was expected to be casteless. In reality when the British rule was firmly established in India, it evolved a new economic approach to the social and cultural problems. As a consequence, society witnessed a transformation from the old economic system into a new one. The introduction of transport system such as railways, buses and tramways in cities and digging canals and laying roads, and the establishment of modern industries generated labour force among the Tamils. Such a trend developed their consciousness and it also helped them to achieve unity. Further, the common restaurants helped to reduce the caste inequality distinctions. There was a great demand for labour force to work in rubber plantations, tea and coffee estates of French and British colonies. Seeing the opportunity, the British Government sent shiploads of workers from Tamil Nadu to far off countries like Fiji, South Africa, Mauritius, West Indies, Malaysia and neighbouring Sri Lanka[13]. Moreover, in India the British Government created employment opportunities to the Tamil labourers in tea and coffee plantations of Wynad, Coorg, Mysore, the Niligries and Annamalais. The introduction of modern transport system, cheap postage and innovation of the printing press improved the communication system and greatly helped the free movement of labourers that acquired a new outlook on life. Gradually, their economic and psychological make-up weakened untouchability[14]. The labourars Tamil districts emigrated to foreign countries and some became economically well-off and on their return home, gave all possible lead to the rest who were still poor. The British administration and the new bureaucratic setup seemed to sabotage all the traditional social barriers in the long run.

The British servants took keen interest in fostering common unity, social interaction and other interpersonal relations among the different groups of weaker sections. Hence, they very carefully nurtured the idea of secularism in their administration. Complete uniformity in legal system and other aspects of life provided an opportunity to the sufferers, who in turn slowly got relief and liberation from the oppression of the traditional society.

The British, in the passage of time, found out the absence of justice in the existing native administration which made the British in 1818 to conduct an enquiry into the condition of the poor bonded labourers under the highly influential caste conscious landlords[15]. Further, the Collectors of all districts of Tamil Nadu were instructed to bring out an adhoc report about the means to rehabilitate them. Based on the report of Collectors, the company's Government enacted the Act of 1833, which placed the labourer's class in a safe position as apprentices in most British possessions. As a next step, the government enacted the '***Slavery Abolition Act of 1843***' and thereby legally abolished slavery and its connected evils[16]. By eradication of the institution of slavery, this act at first banned the sale of slaves. Secondly, regarding the arrears of monetary payment, the court directed landlords not to involve themselves in alleged possession of slaves. Thirdly, no man was allowed to take away the properties of payment by exploiting their poor economic condition. At last the act warned the defaulters who were committing atrocities on the helpless people of serious consequences.

The government then concentrated on removing the other disabilities suffered by the people. It decided to assert civil equality in public institutions. In this endeavour, through a press it declared that all public institutions maintained at the cost of government should be easily accessible to all classes without any distinction. In the same spirit, the British Government also passed the '***Caste Removal Act of 1850***' in order to eradicate casteism on humanitarian considerations. It highly encouraged the people to mingle with one another. The beneficiaries of the British laws had a staunch faith in the British administration. Most of them embraced Christianity to protect themselves from the wrath of the caste-Hindus. At the same time they also faced certain problems like inability to inherit their ancestral property. To remove this problem, the Government enacted the '***Religious Disability Act of 1856***' which allowed the Christian converts to inherit their ancestral properties as a civil right. This civil measure slowly hit the foundation of the sacred domain of Hinduism, which was strongly built upon the age-old practice[17].

The government also came forward to remove other civic disabilities. On 16th May 1859 the Travancore Government under the instruction of British Resident of Madras granted permission to the women of depressed classes including the shanars, to wear clothes on their breast and shoulders[18]. Further in the same year the government enacted '***District Police Act***' by which in every village atleast two or more family members of depressed classes were posted as ***talayaris*** and ***vettis***, who must serve as ***village police***. They were treated as government officials. In 1862 the government enacted the '***Indian Penal Code***' replacing the existing Brahmanic code of Manu-dharma, which upheld caste system and encouraged discrimination. The new British code clearly pointed out that every man is equal before the law. Even the Brahmins were not exempted from the capital punishment, which was absent in the Manu code. Thus an age-old inequality was legally forbidden. In 1884 the Revenue Department asserted that slavery was abolished completely in British India. As a matter of fact, the civil laws and other progressive measures, undertaken by the British created a great awakening among the working class and poor people[19]; Recognizing this V.Krishnaswami Iyer remarked, "British legislation has done a great deal and perhaps all that possible for the legislature to do for the downtrodden classes"[20].

Socio-Religious Movement

The Western educated socio-religious leaders at national and regional level organized many associations and educated the masses against the institution of untouchability. They tried to wipe out the existing social evils, which hampered the growth of the untouchables[21]. They aimed at improvement in the social status and civic position of the untouchables. The removal of untouchability and all its allied evils formed an important item in the programme of all socio-religious reformers movement. In this endeavour, Rajaram Mohan Roy, by founding the ***Brahma Samaj*** on 20th August 1828 attacked untouchability as a by-product of caste system. Keshab Chandra Sen, another leader of ***Prathana Samaj*** by organizing social conferences paid attention to their upliftment. The veteran social reformer, Mahatma Jotirao Phule of Maharastra contributed a lot for the moulding of their consciousness and worked for emancipation. In 1877 by establishing ***Sathyashodha Samaj*** Society of Seeking Truth, he worked for redeeming the untouchables from the exploitation of the caste-Hindus. Another leader Dayananda Saraswathi by founding ***Arya Samaj*** in 1875 pleaded with the masses for removal of discrimination in the society. Swami Vivekananda by founding ***Ramakrishna Mission*** worked for the abolition of the practice of untouchability. He made an attempt to eradicate caste

system from Hindu society and viewed untouchability as the cause of India's downfall and which made Indians cowards and thoroughly contemptible[22].

Another organization known as ***Theosophical Society***, founded by Madam Blavatsky and Col. Olcott in 1886 stood against the varnasharma dharma, and upheld the universal brotherhood of man. Another valiant fighter was Sri Narayana Guru of Trivandrum in Kerala State. He contributed much to the upliftment of the oppressed classes in South India. By establishing ***Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam*** (S.N.D.P) in 1903, the followers of Sri Narayana Guru worked in Madras for the material progress and social upliftment of the untouchables[23]. Muthukkutti Swamigal, who fought against caste system, introduced a number of reforms in religious practices. Ramalinga Adigal of South Arcot also tried to remove caste distinctions and worked for the untouchables and led them to the path of socio-political awakening to create an integrated society.

Besides the above social organizations, the community-minded leaders also started various newspapers that helped the people to realize social hierarchy in terms of caste. D.A.John Nadar started a newspaper called ***Dravida Abhimani*** in Salem; ***Vijayavikatan*** was started by K.S.Kathirvel Nadar at Royapuram in Madras; Govindasamy Nadar started a paper known as ***Sanror Kula Viveka Bodhini*** at Kilariyam in Tanjore district; S.A.Muthus Nadar, another veteran Nadar leader started ***Nadarkula Mitran*** at Aruppukkottai[24]. T.Vijaya Durasami Grammaniar started ***Kshatriya Mitran*** at Tandaiyarpet in Madras. These papers like ***Nadar Nanban***, ***Pandiya Kula Deepam*** and ***Vinoda Vikatan*** worked to redress the grievances of the Nadars and thereby, attempted to protect the welfare of the Nadars. These newspapers inspired them to fight for social right on par with caste-Hindus[25].

Integration of Depressed People

The untouchables were the last group in the social ladder to get awakening among the people of Tamil Nadu. This belated awakening was due to the fact that they were economically deprived, socially submerged, culturally decadent and politically weaker for long time. They were unable to ventilate their grievances and were living as silent sufferers. As members of the subaltern classes and groups, they form part of the labouring masses that actively participate in the production process and wealth creation[28].

Under these circumstances, the problem of untouchability became a national issue. The nationalist caste-Hindu leaders took up the cause of depressed as they were a big vote bank. Also some selfless socio-religious leaders worked for the cause of the untouchables at the national level and gained awakening from others very slowly. Such leaders were the products of western education.

The untouchables of Tamil Nadu began to organize themselves under their leaders. In 1891 they formed the ***Dravida Mahajana Sabha*** to represent their grievances and requirements to the Governement[27]. The Sabha conducted its conference at Ooty on 1st December 1891, where ten resolutions were passed regarding better treatment for the untouchables such as separate schools, scholarships and stipends, reservation of jobs in public services, public rights and removal of all social restrictions. The Sabha sent copies of these resolutions to government and all the socio-political bodies. In 1892 the untouchables of Madras also formed another association known as ***Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha***. These two organizations tirelessly represented the problems of the untouchables to the government. Consequently the Government of Madras appointment Sri Srinivasaraghava Iyengar to study their condition. His report depicted the pitiable condition of the untouchables and recommended to the government to take necessary steps highlighting various measures[28].

The Madras Government heard the reasonable demands of the untouchables and issued different orders which provided all possible help to the untouchables of Tamil Nadu by establishing schools and allotting lands to the landless and ex-servicemen among the untouchables. Furthermore, as a legacy of the British, many members of the depressed society were given postings in the administrative setup. They entered public services at various levels such as Sirasthars, Engineers, Surgeons, Inspectors, Managers, Registrars, Head writers and Guards[29].

To press for more reforms, the Madras Mahajana Sabha invited the untouchable leaders to a conference in Madras in 1892. C.Iyothi Dass and a few other untouchable leaders, who participated in it, put forward the proposals to the government for the assignment of ***Promboke*** lands to them and establishment of more schools. R.Srinivasan, another depressed class leader reiterated this proposal in a conference at Westley High School in Madras. C.Ioythi Dass openly flayed the Indian National Congress as an association of the Brahmins and accused those Brahmins of occupying key posts in the British administrative setup and preventing the officials from doing anything for the untouchables[30].

Conclusion

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed tremendous changes in the socio-political life of the people. Inspite of the colonial nature of the British rule in Tamil Nadu, spectacular changes took place in the thinking pattern of the people during this period. On the one hand there was a political awakening as a counter move against the administrative policies of the colonial power; On the other hand, the progressive legislations and reform measures introduced by the British supplemented the socio-political consciousness. Truly, the political movement by the end of the 19th century transformed itself towards social goal with the initiative of non-brahmins. Ultimately the social ideology predominated over national issues at least for a few decades under the non-brahmin leadership. The non-brahmins along with other depressed classes began to organize themselves for social justice. Infact social justice is a basic requirement for social harmony and national unity.

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Protest Era In The Nineteenth And Twentieth Century - Brahma Samaj In Madras Presidency

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The purpose of this paper is to focus attention on the role of Brahma Samaj as a part of protest movement in the traditional Indian society and its achievements in the erstwhile Madras Presidency during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Brahma Samaj was a progressive social protest organisation. Its founder, Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), was a great humanist and social and religious reformer. On August, 20, 1828, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, by his constructive interpretation of the ancient sacred literature of the Hindus, namely, the Vedas and Upanishads started Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta. He brought about a revolutionary change in the Hindu society by his successful opposition to the practice of 'Sati', namely the immolation of Hindu woman on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband. Independence, universality, spirituality, sociability, collective wisdom and catholicity became the main features of the Brahmo Samaj. The Samaj does not encourage belief in astrology, palmistry and karma theory (Fate). The Samajists do not believe in pilgrimage and rituals. After the demise of Roy, his successors carried the torch of his legacy, and the Brahma Samaj became an All India Movement. It was all due to the efforts taken by Keshab Chandra Sen. In Madras Presidency, it was first evolved as 'Veda Samaj', then Prathana Samaj and later as Brahma Samaj.

Champion of Widow Remarriage

In the Madras Presidency, the Samajists used various techniques to fulfil their reform activities. Social reform through the protest means was the main aim of Brahmos. Social protest through Journals, public meetings, conferences and petitions became the normal feature of the Brahmo Samaj Movement. They succeeded in, persuading the government to pass the act of Sati in 1829, the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 and the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1872. Anti-child marriage campaign, propagation of widow remarriage and education of women marked the beginning of Social Reform Movement in Madras Presidency. Kandukuri Veerasalingam Pantulu was one of the earliest social reformers in South India who worked for purging the society of the evils. Veerasalingam, a great Samajist, championed the cause of weeding out social

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evils. With a handful of dedicated Samajists, he had a common ideal before him, namely, to protest against the blind traditions. He converted all his thoughts and conviction into a plan of action. He was born on April 16, 1848 in Rajamundry in a middle class family. He was an ardent advocate of education for women. He was also for abolishing the devadasi system, child marriage and such other evils. To propagate his views, he started a journal called '*Viveka Vardhini.*' He was the boldest exponent of widow-remarriage in the South. He was inspired by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. He read the ***smritis*** of Manu and ***sastras*** and found that widow-remarriage was not prohibited by the ancient law givers.[1] After discarding his sacred thread, Veerasalingam performed widow remarriage according to Brahmo rites where emphasis was laid on promises to be made by both the bride and bridegroom. In 1880, Veerasalingam and his friends formed the Widow Remarriage Association at Rajahmundry. On December 11, 1881, he conducted the first widow remarriage at his house in Rajamundry, which took the whole of Madras Presidency by storm. A young widow by name Sittamma was married to Gogulapati Sriramalu. Four days after that event, on December 15, 1881, a second widow remarriage took place at Rajamundry which shook the orthodox people in the entire South India.[2]

Unable to stop these marriages, the orthodox people tried to punish Veerasalingam in a different way. At their instigation, the Sankaracharya excommunicated those who participated in the function. Nearly thirty-one families were excommunicated. The stringent punishment was also applied to Veerasalingam and his wife who were excommunicated for life.

The third marriage was celebrated after a fairly long gap of ten months, on October 22, 1882, with great difficulty. After that Vidyasagar wrote to Veerasalingam praising him for his laudable successes. It boosted up the sagging morale in Veerasalingam's camp. Appreciating his service, the British government conferred on him the title of 'Rao Bahadur' in 1893.[3] Besides, Veerasalingam was also credited with performing the first inter-caste marriage of Sarojini Devi, the great poetess with Govinda Rajalu Naidu. As many as forty widow remarriages were performed by Veerasalingam.[4]

For three months in 1897, Veersalingam entered into public discussions at Rajahmundry and at Madras. He had to meet the challenges of his adversaries such as Kokkanda Venkataratnam, Kasi Bhatta, Vedam Venkataraya Shastri and won over them. He wanted to extend his social reform activities in Madras, the headquarters of the Presidency and the nerve center of the cultural

life. Veerasalingam had conducted as many as twenty seven widow remarriages before he had left for Madras. In December 1897, he settled down in Madras. He wanted to publish his collected works in ten volumes at his Chintamani press at Pursawalkkam, which he had purchased for his friend M. Buchayya Pantulu, leader of the Brahmo Movement in the city. On his arrival at Madras, Veeresalingam was elected as the President of South India Brahmo Samaj. Veersalingam was impatient of all claptrap and was allergic to prevarication. He believed that an ounce of practice was worth more than a ton of theory and empty discussion. The first reform dinner that he attended in Madras was the public inter-dining of Brahmins with non-Brahmins in 1898. Veersalingam was surprised when the participants in the dinner were against showing their faces. Veersalingam realised that high sounding pronouncements are useless unless they are manifested in action. He arranged a widow remarriage in Madras from a Vellala Community. By his own contribution, he purchased a site only to raise a Widow Home. His Widow Home near Egmore railway station once served as a center for Brahmo social reform activities.[5]

Veersalingam's wife Rajayalakshmi who championed the women's cause and took charge of widow homes of Rajahmudry, worked as a teacher. She welcomed all the disappointed and desperate widows to her home. She also rendered yeomen service and treated them with warmth and affection. The couple had no issue. The destitute children rescued from danger and death were their own children. Widows above the age of eighteen should obtain permission from their parents. Veersalingam helped the widows to undergo teachers' training and started vocational education like tailoring and drawing.[6] When his widow's home had run into debt, Pithapuram Maharajha came forward with a lumpsum donation of rupees three thousand and a monthly grant of rupees sixty which went a long way towards the settlement of debts.[7]

Veeresalingam propagated his widow remarriage ideology through his extensive tours where he quoted ancient Hindu shastras and won the audience by his powerful argument. As many as sixty three widow remarriages were performed by Veersalingam in the Madras Presidency, for which he was popularly hailed by his admirers as the Vidyasagar of South India.[8] In his attack against established beliefs, he believed in people's cooperation for the success of social legislation. Law prohibits sati and protects women's right but what about old customs against widow remarriage. Even public opinion was opposed to widows remarrying. Unless people changed their views, widow remarriage could not gain momentum. Sway of orthodoxy which caused so much suffering to many could be ended not by legislation alone but by instilling noble ideas, and sense of justice in individual men and women.

The contention of the Brahmos was that by giving proper education to the untouchables a sense of freedom and responsibility could be imparted into their minds, which in turn would take care of them. In the year 1886, the Brahmo Samaj Movement became the movement of the upliftment of untouchables when its leader Venkataratnam adopted four untouchable girls as his own daughters. During that year, in one of his visits to Madras, he saw four untouchable girls begging for food at the Ponneri Railway Station in Madras. He sent his disciples, Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Mokkapati Subba Rao to bring them. He gave them new clothes and adopted them as his own daughters and later on gave them proper education.[9] Even before Gandhiji took up the cause of the untouchables, Venkataratnam took care of them.[10]

Venkataratnam who already earned a name for himself as the 'Father of Untouchables' was instrumental for establishing two lodges at Pithapuram for the boys and girls belonging to the children of the untouchables. They were the first of their kind in the Madras Presidency and offered all facilities for the full physical and mental development of the destitutes.[11] Venkataratnam believed that God appeals through the orphans and that inspires philanthropists to respond. The orphans were taught tailoring and music and were trained to depend upon themselves. The center also arranged for the marriage of the girls and used to sanction thousand rupees each for their marriage. The orphans loved and placed Venkataratnam in high esteem. They addressed him as ***nayana*** (father) and ***pedanayana*** (Father's elder brother). Venkataratnam felt that the orphanage was an ideal place to develop a sense of equality and brotherhood. The Pithapuram Raja's College at Kakinada produced hundreds of graduates and under-graduates from the depressed classes. Many of such beneficiaries held high ranks in administration. Brahmo Samaj gave new life to many destitutes. It is one of the greatest achievements of the Brahmos.[12]

Venkataratnam always wished to understand others' problems. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, a well known freedom fighter, happened to be a student of Venkataratnam. So Venkataratnam pitied his poverty and used to lend him money occasionally.[13] During his tenure as the Vice-Chancellor of University of Madras (1925-28) he became a role model. Out of the total emoluments of rupees seventy thousand of his salary, he spent only 5000 for his annual personal expenditure. He diverted the remaining amount on constructive works, namely, extending financial support to the deserved and initiating new education schemes. On one occasion Venkataratnam gave rupees one thousand and five hundred to

some poor untouchable students and helped them to pay their college fees.. Venkataratnam helped his friends who fell ill even at the risk of being affected by their illness which was contagious.[14] He developed high passion for social work and did not worry about his own health.

In his address to the untouchables, Venkataratnam said that no one can help those who cannot help themselves. To quote him "The supreme effort to shake off your lethargy, to dispel your ignorance and superstition, to discard your objectionable habits, to improve your domestic and communal conditions and surroundings, one must devote oneself for the sake of the welfare of the community itself.[15] Turning to their other responsibilities, Venkataratnam stressed on cleanliness. He advised them to be clean always and this will have the required effect. Otherwise the caste-Hindus will put as many excuses as possible to destroy them. During the years of struggle for freedom against the British rule, Venkataratnam adivised Indians to change the attitude of the caste prejudices first before they could ask for political freedom. He compared the depressed classes with dwarf and the caste-Hindus with giant. The dwarf would get all the beatings and the giant would win.[16] Venkataratnam was thoroughly dissatisfied with the caste-Hindus.

On November 22, 1929 in his address to the depressed classes of the Government Elementary School at Machlipatnam, Venkataratnam compared human brain with a diamond, which shines even in the darkness of night. When a diamond is taken from the earth it has no brilliance or shining. Skilled men will shape it. Likewise human mind can be sharpened by sincere training. Venkataratnam put into their ears certain home truths. Will they pick up dirt form the ground and taste it. No, they will remove the dirt and preserve the precious element if there is any. If a building is good, it means that the base is good. In the same way, one must be good and strong in every way, body, mind and soul.[17]

The remarkable deed of Venkataratnam as the nominated member of Madras Legislative Council was his fight for the rights of the depressed classes. He claimed that rule should be modified and standards should be moderated and the differential treatment accorded to the untouchables should be given up. He spoke that there is no community that does not contain poor member but there is no poverty so depressing as this poverty of caste."[18] He viewed that God is for all and there is no place to high sect or low sect in the domain of God.[19] The Brahmo campaign for the upliftment of the untouchables continued under the above leadership of Venkatratnam.

Not merely satisfied with theorizing and intellectualization, the Samajists stuck to their position and belief and to a considerable extent, succeeded in reforming the society. The vigilant campaign of social equality enabled the mobilization of all sects in the Hindu society. The Hindu society began to realise that the evils of the caste system was a danger to the national integration.

Important Brahmo Samaj Centres

Many more Brahmo Samaj centers came up in various parts of the Madras Presidency. In the Tamil speaking areas, the major Brahmo Samaj centers were established at George Town and Purasawalkkam. The Purasawalkam branch was established on April 26, 1885.[20] The Southern India Brahmo Samaj had its branches at Pudukkotai, Salem, Coimbatore, Mangalore, Alleppey and Calicut.[21] Leaders like Narisimhalu Naidu, Pomathu Ammal and Bangaru Ammal were instrumental in starting a branch of Samaj at Cuddalore on September 10, 1905. They ran schools and served the society. They strove for constructive social reform activities. The samaj centers never forgot to remember the services rendered by the important all-India Brahmo leaders. In 1933 for instance, the birth centenary of Raja Rammohanroy, the founder, was celebrated as an important function in various parts of the country.[22]

After the demise of Veersalingam in 1919, the Samaj was guided by Venkataratnam up to 1925 and later on by K. Hanumantha Rao till 193 . Under the guidance of K. Hanumantha Rao,the membership rose to thirty two. Another well known town of the Madras Presidency was Kakinada. A Samaj with fifteen members was founded in 1888. The appointment of Venkataratnam as the principal of a college; the visit of Bipenchandrapal of Bengal to deliver speech on Brahmo Samaj and Swaraj, and the opening of orphan centers for the untouchables in 1909 were the highlights of the Samaj. Palaparthi Narasimham with Ratnamanikamma Palaparthi were appointed to report the activities of the Samaj. The first inter religious conference took place at Kakinada on 22-23 February 1936. On September 1, 1906 Nala Krishna Rao, a Brahmo fighter established a Samaj at Elur. By 1916 there were twenty-six members which included the representatives from the downtrodden like Chinta Shashayya, Atti Suryanarayana Ramudu Gangayya. The establishment of separate mandir for ladies and destitutes under the guidance of S. Shyamalamba, K. Pitchamma and S. Ganga marked a good beginning. Later, the Samaj's activities were guided by Gnamaba who was responsible for starting samajas for ladies in various places. In response to her invitation on November, 5, 1933 Mudhulakshmi

Reddy, a great Champion of Women Liberation Movement in Tamil Nadu visited to talk on social reform. Between the years 1905 and 1909 the trained Brahmos installed the Samaj at Kumudavalli, Relangi, Yanam Ramachandrapuram, Mandepaeta with Madhavaram as the center.[23]

Then came Machlipatnam of Krishna district. On September 3, 1882 Koka Venkataratnam Naidu with eleven progressive minded men started Samaj. The Samaj took up the matter of widow remarriages. In 1901 Pattabhi Sitaramayya performed first widow remarriage of Chiranjeevamma and Koka Venkatasubba Rao and by 1910 four such marriages had taken place. Another remarkable year of 1926 marked the marriage of Saguna Mahalakshmi, the adopted daughter of Venkataratnam with Kambampati Ramasastri. Popularly called Tharakam, Ramasastri earned himself as the pragmatic Brahmo Social Reformer in the post Veersalingam and Venkataratnam period.[24] Al Vijiawada a samaj centre was started in 1882 with its library founded in 1904 by one Krishnaya. In the same year on September 27, a great literary critic Cattamanchi Ramalinga Reddy visited the Samaj and spoke on Brahmo Samaj.

General Features of The Brahmo Samaj

The Brahmo Social Reform Movement, spearheaded by Veeresalingam and Venkataratnam in the Madras Presidency, constituted an illuminating chapter in the annals of Social History of South India. One of the main features of the Brahmo Samaj was the regular contact that the Brahmos had with the movement at Bengal and Bombay. Prominent Bengal Brahmo leaders who visited the erstwhile Madras Presidency were Sivanath Sastry, Sitanath Tatwa Bhushan, Bipin-Chandra-Pal, Hemachandra Sarkar, Brajagopal Niyogi, Nirbharapriya Ghose from Bengal and V.R. Shinde from Bombay.[25] The important Brahmos who visited Calcutta included V. Ramakrishna Rao and I. Subukrishnayya. In the year 1906 Venkataratnam gave his presidential address in the Theistic Conference held at Calcutta.[26]

The translation of the works of Bengal Brahmo literature into Telugu and Tamil language was one of the features of the movement. The earliest Brahmo Sridharalu Naidu had translated the works of Debendranath Tagore into Telugu and Tamil. For many years, the Samaj's leader in Madras Mannava Butchayya Pantulu ran a journal '***The Brahmo Public opinion***' and published it in English, Telugu and Tamil. '***The Fellow worker***' and '***The People's Friend***'

weekly published by the Samaj which owned its press at Purasawalkkam in Madras called the 'Brahmo Orphan Asylum Press'.[27] Kavikondala Sambasivarao translated Keshab Chandra Sen's 'Jeevan-Veda and Bramha Gitopanished' into Telugu. P. Lakshminarayana translated Pandit Sitanath-Tatwa-Bhushan's 'Brahmo-Philosophy' into Telugu. P. Narasimham's Brahmamatham, T. Prakashrayudu's 'Gita Nivedakalu', 'Jesus Sandesam', were some of the important works. Barahmos like T. Prakashrayudu and K. Rama Sastry published a number of short biographies of all Brahmo leaders of Bengal in English and Telugu.

The establishment of Andhra Brahmo Sadhana Ashram in 1913 and the Andhra Brahmo Sabha in 1940 in Andhra marked an important step taken by the Brahmos in Andhra. The aim of Andhra Brahmo Sadhana Ashram was to practise, and propagate Brahmo Dharma. It conducted Brahmo Conferences. Brahmo journals like ***Dharma Sadhni, Dharma Jyothi*** and ***Sadhana*** in (English) were popular in those days.[28] The Brahmo Pracharaka Nidhi published many books on Brahmo literature and also a number of short biographies of the Brahmo leaders. The Andhra Brahmo Sabha became a central body. It organized the theistic conferences, published pamphlets, and conducted competitive examinations in liberal theology. A number of theistic conferences were held all over the Madras Presidency. In the year 1897 the First Theistic Conference was held at Rajahmundry. In the following year the Second Theistic Conference was held at Kakinada. Again in 1905 a Theistic Conference was held at Rajahmundry, followed by Guntur in 1906, Kakinada and Machlipatnam in 1907 and 1908 respectively. However between 1909 and 1939, only four theistic conferences were conducted. The Machlipatnam Samaj organized theistic conference in 1932 followed by Ramachandrapuram in 1935, Chirala and Eluru in 1939. The Brahmo movement was mainly propagated by urban and lower middle class section. Except the Rajah of Pithapur, not even a handful of people were land holders or owners of any other property. Hence, the financial instability as well as the shadow of the freedom struggle made the Brahmo leaders suspend some of the social reform activities . The noble mission of running schools for untouchables and orphans came to a grinding halt. The number of Brahmos who were officially enrolled in the Samajas did not exceed a few hundred. There were about thirty Brahmo families. The Kakinada Brahmo Samaj which claimed maximum membership, did not have more than one hundred. Though Venkataratnam's personal charm and his brilliant exposition of Brahmo ideas in English attracted many educated people, the membership of Kakinada

Brahmo Samaj did not exceed one hundred. The leaders of the Brahmo Samaj were all men of substance and standing, highly educated but the ambition of making the Brahmo samaj a mass movement was not realized by the leaders. The Brahmo concept of free thinking paved the way for the progress of national movement in Madras Presidency.

There were some concrete achievements of the Brahma Samaj. It has broken the barriers of the *zenana*. It has raised its protest against the baneful institution of child marriage and has removed the disability under which the Hindu widows laboured in the matter of remarriage. Encouragement of inter-caste marriage, strong disapproval of intemperance and polygamy, upliftment of the untouchables and empowerment of women were all part of action oriented activities of the Samajists. In Madras Presidency, the Brahmo leader Veerasalingam gave a new dimension to social protest by bringing into it the idea of propaganda and publicity. Venkataratnam was an undaunted social worker and an orator of unrivalled power. Their main concentration was society in general and downtrodden people in particular. They aspired to provide the children of India the roots of responsibility and the wings of independence. The Samajists introduced among the upper caste a sense of individual responsibility, a sense of boldness, a sense of justice and a sense of compassion for the untouchables. The Brahmo Samajists sustained the concept of universalism and collective wisdom which play a vital role in a heterogenous society like India where communal, regional, divisive and chauvinistic forces often raise their ugly heads. In certain cases, the untouchables too involved themselves in the samaj activities. The samaj centers, though limited in number as well as in membership, became the centres of congregational worship, widow remarriage, anti-child marriage campaign, free educational institutions for the untouchables, orphanage centres and later as inter-caste marriage centres.

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Sree Narayanana Guru (1854-1928)
A Saint Reformer

Dr. G.D. Anantha Vijayakumari*
Dr. L. Selvamuthu Kumarasami**

Sree Narayana Guru, the philosopher saint of modern Kerala, was the architect of a peaceful, revolution, which eventually lifted the lowly and down-trodden in Kerala to the status of respectable human beings. Thousands of his followers hailed him as a 'messiah' and an avatar who came to save them. The saint reformer, who led a quiet but significant social revolution, gave the watch-words 'One Caste, One Religion and One God for all men'[1].

The Caste Structure Of Kerala

When Sree Narayana Guru came on the scene in the mid-nineteenth century, Kerala society was totally under the spell of the caste demon with all its evil effects. Divisions and sub divisions based on caste hierarchy were strictly implemented with the dividing walls of untouchability. Privileges for the high castes in human punishments were the accepted norms of the day. This unfortunate condition was the result of the Aryanisation of Kerala. As the final product of Aryanisation, Kerala society was crystallized into two major caste based categories, the caste Hindus or Savarnas (fair coloured) and the non-caste Hindus or Avarnas (dark coloured). The Savarna hierarchy consisted of the Nambudiris or Kerala Brahmins, the Kshatriyas or the rulers and Sudras or Nairs in a descending order. The Avarna hierarchy had Ezhava at the top followed by the Pulaya, Paraya etc. with the Nayadi occupying the last rung[2]. The Avarnas were definitely below the rank of Sudras. The Savarnas never treated the Avarnas as human beings at all. Even if permitted to eke out a bare existence, they were burdened with heavy taxes. The Avarnas were compelled to pay taxes in the name of caste, profession, and human organs and of innumerable items and in the process, swelled the chieftains' coffers[3]. The following were the examples

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I. Tharivari- tax on hand looms
II. Valayara-tax on fishing boats and nets
III. Chakkuvari-tax on oil press
IV. Thalavari-tax to be paid by an Avarna for the hair on his head
V. Mulakaran- tax on women to be paid depending on the size of their breast
VI. Chetthukaram- tax to be paid by the workers for the number of palms he claimed in a day for extracting toddy.

One hundred and five varieties of the taxes under this type were withdrawn in Travancore in 1865. However the social humiliations continued to be in force because there was a firm belief that the lower castes defiled the higher in a spiritual or ritualistic sense. Hence the principle of untouchability was maintained very strictly. Even Sarvarnas were victims of this. Since the Nambudiris were alleged to be the highest and most sacred, even the Kshatriyas were regarded as polluting the Nambudiris by touch and approach. The Kshatriya was therefore compelled to keep a distance of two feet away from the Nambudiris and the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. Similarly members of each community to preserve untouchability intact, should keep separate distances from the Savarnas. For the Paraya the distance was 64 ft, the Pulaya 54 ft and Ezhava 36ft[4]. The Avarnas were denied the right to use footwear, umbrella, good cloths or ornaments. The rulers, the custodians of law and the Savarnas, the custodians of tradition, combined together to see that even the 'silliest' caste rule was maintained intact. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Savarnas had monopolised all social, economic and political opportunities of the state. They had taken care to see that the Avarnas did not get any opportunity worth the name for individual or communal development.

Nanu's Parents

Sree Narayana Guru was born on 20th Sept. 1854 in Viyalvarath house at Chempazhanthi village in the taluka of Neyyantinkara, 10 miles north east of Trivandrum. After three sisters, he was born to his parents Kochuvilayil Madanasan and Kuttiammal[5]. His parents affectionately called him 'Nanu'. Madanasan was a farmer who was instructed in Sanskrit, Astrology and Ayurvedic medicine. The family was of lower middle class type and belonged to the Ezhava caste which was considered 'untouchable' in those days by the so called caste Hindus.

Education

Nanu's first teacher was his own father Madanasan. He had formal schooling in the village school of Chempazhanthi Mootha Pillai. Even while he was studying in the primary school, the boy had to rear cattle and plough the field. But these difficulties never stood in the way of his acquiring knowledge. After learning Sanskrit and Ayurveda from his maternal uncle, Krishna Vaidyar, Nanu was sent for higher education in Sanskrit to Kummampalli Raman Pillai Asan[6]. In due course of time, Nanu became an expert in Ayurvedam, a scholar of Sanskrit, Hindu Scripture and Philosophy. After completing his education, Nanu returned home and started teaching Sanskrit to children in Kudippallikkoodam. Hence Nanu came to be known as Nanu Asan.

During the period of rest, he took refuge in solitude and immersed himself in matters connected with God. The family tried to tie him down in a marriage. Kaliamma was the beautiful bride chosen for Nanu[7]. But Nanu broke free and to register his protest, he left his home. He carried across forests, mountains, hills and valleys. During his wandering, he worked for sometime in a Tamil bookshop in Trivandrum. He learnt Tamil during this period and voraciously read Tamil literature and philosophical treatise like Thirukkural, Thiruppukal, Thiruppavai, Sivapuranam and Thirumandiram. He became proficient in Tamil[8].

Parivrajaka

Nanu became a Parivrajaka (one who wanders from place to place in quest of Truth). He did Tapas in Pillathadam cave in Maruthvaamala near Kanyakumari. This lonely life of intense meditation lasted 7-8 long years. It is a still a mystery how he managed to live so long in the caves solely dependent on herbs. It was when Nanu was trekking along in the Manacaud region that he met Kunjan Pillai Chattambi, popularly known as Chattamby Swamikal. Having become close to each other, they became quite intimate. Both of them were happy to have had the opportunity to command Thycaud Ayyayu's love and respect and also to pick up yogic lessons under him[9].

His meditation on the Advaitha philosophy of Adishankaracharya revealed to him a great truth that since the same divine spirit glows in all human beings, all humanity is one. Acceptance of the non-duality of the individual self and Divine self-Jeevatma and Paramatma, led to the assertion that there is ab

solutely no difference between one man and another. Hence he found that Varna and caste system and its direct off shoot untouchability, were absolutely baseless, artificial and arbitrary. On further meditation, he arrived at the logical conclusion that there is only one caste- humanity, one religion- Humanism and one God- the universal spirit[10]. He also understood that the social degradation of the Avarnas started when they were barred entry into the temple and with the denial of education. So he decided to restore the lost dignity and self-respect of the Avarnas by means of the very same temples and education. Narayana Asan became Narayana Guru now.

Ezhava Siva

Temples were set up as a parallel system to that of the caste Hindus who denied the entry of Ezhavas in their temples. Narayana Guru opened his temples not only to the members of his own community but also to the Pulayas and other lower classes. When the Brahmins questioned the right of an Ezhava to consecrate such temples, Narayana Guru gave the famous reply that he was consecrating ''the Ezhava Siva and not the Brahmin Siva[11].'' At Aruvipuram near Trivandrum, he installed a stone taken from the near by stream and thus founded the first temple in 1888. He asked the Ezhavas themselves to officiate as priests in their temples instead of employing Brahmins. The Ezhavas gave up the practice of untouchability with respect to the castes below them. They defied the restriction on free movement in the streets of the towns and villages based on the practice of untouchability. He also succeeded in abolishing animal sacrifices which were freely indulged in by the Ezhavas, the Harijans and others in the name of religion. Narayana Guru was much interested in social reforms. He raised his powerful voice against the observance of the customary rituals and ceremonies like Talikettu, Tirandu kalyanam, Pulikudi etc. by the Ezhavas and gradually persuaded them to give up all these irrational practices which had been responsible for enormous waste of money[12].

Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam

By 1901 he won recognition from the public. In 1903 the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam was founded with his gospel ' One caste, one religion, one God.' Narayana Guru was its life President. A periodical 'Vivekodayam' was started as the mouthpiece of the Yogam. As part of the program of SNDP Yogam, a number of temples were built. In 1904 Narayana Guru settled at Sivagiri, Varkala, near Trivandrum. Two more temples, one at

Anjengo and another at Peringottukara, were founded in that year. In 1906 a temple was set up at Trichur and next year at Cannanore, which was followed by one at Tellicherry in 1908. In 1910 temples were founded at Calicut and Mangalore. In 1911 the temple of Sarada at Sivagiri was consecrated and it has ever since been a great pilgrim center[13]. Although it is seen that a good number of temples were founded, it cannot be said that he was an orthodox believer in temples. He, of course, felt that temples were necessary for preserving the inner purity and physical cleanliness of the people. But he was not particular as to what or whom the people worshipped. In one of the temples founded by him, he installed a big mirror so that people might offer worship to their own images in the mirror[14].

As part of the work of the Yogam, Narayana Guru started a number of schools first attached to temples and then separately. The Sanskrit schools at Aruvipuram and Sivagiri are worth special mention. Libraries and reading rooms sprang up with every unit of SNDP. In course of time, the schools developed into colleges, vocational training institutions, teacher training colleges etc.

The third important objective of the Yogam was the economic independence through industries. The first industrial Exhibition was organised on the second Annual day of the SNDP at Kollam in January 1905. The exhibition boosted the morale of the community as it gave them an opportunity to display their expertise and craftsmanship.

While SNDP was a secular organization with its branches throughout Kerala, he also established an order of Sanyasis to help the community regarding its religious and spiritual matters. He declared that there is only one God and that all mankind is one with no caste-based differnce. For 15 years he traveled widely and helped them to clean up their houses and streets and develop clean habits. He then altered their diet and thus pointed the right road to reform and prosperity.

Om Sahodaryam Sarvatra

In 1913,the Guru founded an Ashram at Alwaye. It was called 'Advaita Ashram.' This was an important event in the life of the Guru in his spiritual quest. Ashram was dedicated to a great principle- 'Om Sahodaryam Sarvatra. (all men are equal in the eyes of God) This became the motto of the new Ashram.

Tours Of Guru

In 1918 the Guru made a tour of Ceylon preaching his ideals for the upliftment of Ezhavas and was successful in getting a good number of followers there. In 1921 a Conference of Brotherhood was held in Alwaye at his insistence. In 1923 he paid a second visit to Ceylon.

In 1924 a conference of all religions was held at Alwaye. The Guru thought that a comparative study of the various religions would be very useful for achieving the end of Universal Brotherhood. Thus the Brahma Vidya Mandiram was inaugurated as the foundation of a center for studying the science of the Absolute[15]. In 1926 Guru visited Coimbatore and the Nilgris and this was the final stage of his frequent travels.

Literary Contributions

As a religious leader and a social reformer, Narayana Guru gave expression to his views through writing. Being a Sanskrit scholar, he could write in a melodious and fluent style. As early as in 1884, his poems incorporating Siva mythology into Advaita Vedanta became popular. In 1897 he composed 'Athmop Adesa Satakam', a book on original Vedanta. The Darsanamala, which was composed in about 1916, represents a very high standard of mystical literature[16]. His poems number forty-seven and they have been collected and published.

Teachings Of Narayana Guru

Whichever the religion,
It suffices
If it makes a better man.

One in kind, one in faith,
One in God is man
Of one same womb, one there is at all.

All are of one Self-fraternity
Such being the dictum to avow,
In such a light how can we take life
And devoid of least pity go on to eat
Ask not, Say not, Think not caste

Acts that one performs
For one's own sake
Should also aim for the good
Of other men.

Love of others is my happiness,
Love that is mine is happiness for others.
And so, truly, deeds that benefit a man
Must be a cause for other's happiness too.
Grace, Love, Mercy -all the three -
Stand for one same reality- Life's Star
He who loves is who really lives.

Whatever may be the difference in men's
creed, dress, language etc. because they all
belong to the same kind of creation,
there is no harm at all in their dining
together or having marital relation with
one another.

Liquor is poison
Make it not
Sell it not
Drink it not.

Devoid of dividing walls
Of caste or race
Or hatred of rival faith
We all live here
In Brotherhood[17]

Two Memorable Events

Two memorable events took place at Shivagiri, after the Guru settled down there. The first was the visit of Poet Rabindranath Tagore, and the second was that of Mahatma Gandhi. The visits of these two great men of modern India to the Ashram show the greatness of the Guru.

Rabindranath Tagore was on a visit to South India. Having heard about Narayana Guru, he desired to call on him. The people of the villages around the Ashram welcomed the poet with great enthusiasm. It was almost a welcome befitting a king. He was taken in a procession in a palanquin ('pallak'). The people acclaimed with great joy the meeting of the Nobel Laureate and the Guru[18].

The Guru and the Mahatma met in 1925[19]. It was an equally significant event. The Mahatma's philosophy of life and his constructive programme fascinated the Guru. He had given full support to Khadi, village industries and above all to the cause of uplifting the classes, which had been pushed down, and particularly the attempts to end 'untouchability'. Narayana Guru had done it in his own way in Kerala. The worship of God in a very simple manner and the equality of all in the eyes of God - these principles he had practised. His main aim was to dispel all superstitious beliefs and practices. The members of the Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam worked for this aim. They thought of securing the right of temple entry to people of all castes. They tried to organize this Reform Movement on the lines of Satyagraha taught by Mahatma Gandhi.

The Vykom Satyagraha

Three young men, T.K.Madhavan, K. Kelappan and Krishnaswamy took up the leadership of the Satyagraha Movement. T.K.Madhavan managed to get "the abolition of untouchability" to be included in the national program of the Congress at Kakinada Meeting. Satyagraha took place in a town called 'Vykom'. At Vykom, the way to the temple of Lord Shiva lay through a particular street. Low-castes were not allowed to walk there. The Satyagraha was to put an end to this unjust rule. Narayana Guru did not participate in the Satyagraha. He encouraged the volunteers who were all his devotees and gave the Vellor Matom at the disposal of the volunteers. People who believed in very old practices opposed the Movement. The Satyagrahis suffered much trouble at their hands. But the Satyagrahis bore them with patience. At last, in April 1925, Gandhiji himself came to Vykom to see that the question was settled[20]. It was on this occasion that the Guru and Gandhiji met. Gandhiji had great regard for the Guru. The Satyagraha succeeded only partially. Of course, the right of way in the public street was given to all people. But it was only in 1936 that the Travancore State Government issued an order in the name of the Maharaja and gave the right of entry to temples to the Harijans also, for the first time in the whole of India. The Satyagraha ended. The Guru built a Primary School for the

use of poor children, as a memorial to the satygraha, on the spot where the Satyagraha was conducted.

The Passing Away Of The Guru

The Guru became seriously ill in September 1928. He could not leave the bed for sometime. Devotees came in huge crowds to have the last Darshan. In the same year, his devotees in many places, mostly in Kerala, Madras and Simhala celebrated the birthday of the Guru. On the twentieth of September, the Guru passed away at Varkala, a place that was very dear to him[21]. His followers felt a great loss. The world too lost a truly great teacher. His success was that he left many true followers behind him who continued the work. Notable among them were Sahodaran (Brother) Ayyapan, Dr .Palpu, T.K. Madhavan and Poet Kumaran Asan[22].

Narayana Guru was one of the outstanding visionaries India has produced since the death of Shankaracharya. Eminent politicians, saints, scholars, students and disciples have described Guru with various titles emphasizing his life, works and teachings. He is the "Great Swamy Narayana Guru of Malayalam" (Tagore) "The Great Saint" (Swamy Sivananda), "Guru an Avatar" (Acharya Vinoda Bhave), "The prophet of new order" (Swami Dharma Theerthan) A Great religious teacher, (Jawharlal Nehru), A saint who revolutionized history (V.V.Giri), "Guru the Saint Reformer of Kerala" (R.Shrinivasan), "A modern prophet of social renaissance" (Bishop Theodosius), "Narayana Guru World citizen" (Fred Hass)[23].

Conclusion

The silent sage was the recognized spiritual leader of more than two million people in South for whom his word was more imperative than the laws. Within a period of less than a decade, he had established number of places of worship on the West Coast of India alone, which are day by day growing into centers of educational, philanthropic and economic activities.

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இராமலிங்கரும் சமயசன்மார்க்கமும்

முனைவர் .ச. சோமசுந்தரம்

ஆங்கிலேயர் வருகைக்கு முன்னர் இந்தியாவை ஆண்ட மன்னர்கள் ஆட்சியதிகாரத்தை செலுத்தியதோடு, தாம் சார்ந்திருந்த சமயங்களையும் போற்றி வளர்த்தனர். பிறசமயவாதிகளுக்கும் உரிய மதிப்பளித்து நடுநிலை காத்தனர். கிழக்கிந்திய கம்பெனியார் வரவுக்குப் பிறகு இந்த நிலை மாறியது. பிரிட்டிஷார் ஆட்சியதிகாரத்தைப் பரப்புவதோடு கிறித்தவ சமயத்தையும் பரப்பத் தொடங்கினர். ஆங்கில மொழிப் பயிற்றுவிப்பும் கிறித்தவ சமயப் பரப்புதலுக்குத் துணை செய்வதாகவே அமைந்தது. மொழி, சமயம், கலாச்சாரம் என ஏற்றுக்கொள்ளும் பட்சத்தில் ஆட்சியை அதிகாரத்தை ஏற்றுக்கொள்வதில் தடையேற்படாது என்றுணர்ந்து செயல்பட்டனர்.

ஏற்கனவே இந்துமத ஏகாதிபத்திய வாதிகளால் புறக்கணிக்கப்பட்டு, சாதி-சமய- பொருளாதார ரீதியாக தாழ்த்தப்பட்டு, ஒடுக்குமுறைகளுக்கு உள்ளாகியிருந்த மக்களிடம் கிறித்தவ சமயத்தைப் பரப்ப முற்பட்ட பாதிரிமார்கள் அதில் வெற்றியும் கண்டனர். ஆதிக்க இந்துக்களால் சுரண்டலுக்குள்ளாகியிருந்த மக்கள் எந்தவித எதிர்ப்புமின்றி_மதமாற்றத்தை ஏற்றுக்கொள்ள முன் வந்தனர். சாதியாலும் சமயத்தாலும் புறக்கணிக்கப் பட்டிருந்த மக்களுக்கு அன்பும் அரவணைப்பும் கிடைத்ததோடு, கல்வி-மருத்துவம்-குடியிருப்பு மற்றும் பிற வசதிகளும் கிறித்தவ சமயத்தால் கிடைத்தன. இந்து மதம் எந்த_எதிர்ப்புமில்லாதிருந்த நிலையில், இஸ்லாமியரின் நுழைவைத் தொடர்ந்து, கிறித்தவர்களின் நுழைவு கலாச்சார ரீதியாக புதிய மாற்றங்களைக் கொண்டு வந்தபோது பல குழப்பங்களும் எதிர்ப்புகளும் தோன்றின.

கி.பி. 1757-1857 இடையிலான ஒரு நூற்றாண்டுக் காலத்தில் அரசியல் துறையில் ஏற்பட்ட மாற்றங்கள் சமயத்துறையிலும் பல மாற்றங்களுக்கு வழிகோலின. அந்நியர்களின் நுழைவால் அரசியல் -பொருளாதார ரீதியாக அடிமைப்பட்டிருந்ததோடு, சமயரீதியாகவும் அந்நிய ஆதிக்கம் நுழைந்த போது சொந்த மதத்தில் உள்ள சீர்கேடுகளை நீக்கி, அதனைக் காப்பாற்ற வேண்டும் என்ற சிந்தனை படித்த இந்திய மதவாதிகளிடம் ஏற்பட்டது. ஒடுக்கப்பட்டிருந்த மக்கள் கிறித்தவ சமயத்தை எதிர்ப்பின்றி ஏற்றுக்கொண்ட நிலையில் படித்த-வசதியான இந்துக்களிடம் அது அதிர்ச்சியை ஏற்படுத்தியது. இந்துமதக் கொள்கைகளில் நிலவிய சாதி-சமய பேதங்களை, ஒற்றுமையின்மையைப் போக்க வேண்டிய தேவையேற்பட்டது. இந்தமத வாதிகள் தோற்றுவித்த மூடநம்பிக்கைகளை, சாதி உயர்வு தாழ்வுப் போக்கினை, போலிச் சடங்குகளை,

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தமிழாய்வுத் துறை, பிஷப் ஹீபர் கல்லூரி, திருச்சி - 17.

தேவையற்ற நடைமுறைகளை ஒழித்துச் சீர்திருத்தம் காணவேண்டுமென்று எண்ணினர். இந்து சமய வழிபாட்டு முறைகளில் இருந்த பேதங்களை ஒழித்து அனைத்து - மக்களிடமும் ஒருமைப்பாட்டை உண்டாக்க வேண்டுமென்று கருதினர். இப்படியான சிந்தனைகளின் விளைச்சலாக, இக்காலகட்டத்தே தோன்றிய சமயப் பெரியார்கள் நால்வரை எண்ணிட இடமுளது. இராஜாராம் மோகன்ராய், இராமலிங்க வள்ளலார், தயானந்த சரஸ்வதி, இராமகிருஷ்ண பரமஹம்சர் ஆகியோரே அந்த நால்வராவர்.

நால்வரில் இராமலிங்கர்

கி.பி. 1774 ஆம் ஆண்டு மேற்கு வங்காளத்தில் இராசாராம் மோகன்ராய் பிறந்தார். 1823 ஆம் ஆண்டில் தமிழ் நாட்டில் இராமலிங்கர் தோன்றினார். 1824 ஆம் ஆண்டில் குஜராத்தில் தயானந்த சரஸ்வதி பிறந்தார். 1836ஆம் ஆண்டு வங்காளத்தில் இராமகிருஷ்ணர் பிறந்தார். இராமலிங்கரைத் தவிர மற்றமூவரும் அந்தண குலத்தைச் சேர்ந்தவர்களாவர். மேலும் மற்ற மூவரும் கல்வியாலும், மொழியறிவாலும் இராமலிங்கரைவிடவும் அதிகப் பயிற்சி பெற்றவர்களாயிருந்தனர். இராஜாராம் மோகன்ராயும், தயானந்தரும் உருவவழிபாட்டை முற்றிலும் மறுத்தனர். இராமலிங்கரும இராமகிருஷ்ணரும் உருவ வழிபாட்டை முற்றிலுமாக மறுக்கவில்லை.

. இவர்தம் சமய நடைமுறைகளில் ஒருசில வேறுபாடுகள் நிலவினாலும் சமுதாய-சமய சீர்திருத்தச் சிந்தனைகளில் ஒத்துப்போயினர். தெய்வம் ஒன்று என்றும், சாதி வேறுபாடு முற்றிலும் ஒழிக்கப்பட வேண்டும் என்றும், சமய வேற்றுமைகளை ஒழித்து சமரசம் காண வேண்டும் என்றும் விரும்பினர். அந்தணர்கள் சொல்லும் வேதக் கருத்துக்களை அப்படியே ஏற்றுக்கொள்ளாமல், தாமே படித்துத் தேர்ந்து தெளியவேண்டும், ஆணும் பெண்ணும் சமம் என்றுணர வேண்டும். எல்லா மக்களிடமும் ஒற்றுமையும் சமரசமும் நிலவவேண்டும் என்ற கருத்துக்களை முன்வைத்துப் பிரச்சாரம் மேற்கொண்டனர்.

இராஜாராம் மோகன்ராய் இந்துசமய மக்களிடம் சீர்திருத்தம் காண பிரம்ம சமாஜம் என்ற அமைப்பை உருவாக்கினர். தயானந்த சரஸ்வதி ஆரிய சமாஜம் என்ற அமைப்பை உண்டாக்கினார். இராமலிங்கர் சாதி சமய பேதங்களிலிருந்து நீங்கிய - மூட நம்பிக்கைகளற்ற - ஏழை பணக்காரன் என்ற பொருளாதார பேதமற்ற - புதிய மனித சமுதாயத்தை உருவாக்க எண்ணி சமரச சுத்த சன்மார்க்க சங்கம் என்ற அமைப்பைத் தோற்றுவித்தார். இராமகிருஷ்ணர், அவராகத் தனிச்சங்கம் காணவில்லை என்றாலும், அவரது சீடர் விவேகானந்தரால் இராமகிருஷ்ண மடம் உருவாக்கப்பட்டது.

வேத ஆகம நெறிகளுக்கெதிராக இராமலிங்கர்

இராமலிங்கர் இளமைக்காலத்தே முறையான ஏட்டுக் கல்வியைப் பெற்றதாகத் தெரியவில்லை. ஈஓதாதுணர்ந்தவரீ என்றே குறிப்பிடப் பெறுகிறார். இறைவழிபாட்டில் தெளிவு வேண்டும் என்ற கொள்கை கொண்டிருந்தார். வேத - ஆகம நெறிகளில் நாட்டமின்றி உண்மையான உள்ள நெகிழ்வே, இரக்க சிந்தையே பக்தி என்பதில் உடன்பாடுடையவராயிருந்தார். ஈகலையுரைத்த கற்பனையே நிலையெனக் கொண்டாடும் கண்மூடி வழக்கமெலாம் மண்மூடிப் போகவேண்டுமீ என்று பாடிய இராமலிங்கர் புராணங்கள் வரலாறுகள் அல்ல என்று மறுத்ததோடு, அவை தத்துவங்களுக்கான விளக்கங்கள் என்றுரைத்தார். அதனை உள்ளபடி உணர வேண்டுமென்றார்.

"வேத நெறி ஆகமத்தின் நெறி பவு ராணங்கள்
விளம்பு நெறி இதிகாசம் விதித்த நெறி முழுதும்
ஓதுகின்ற சூதனைத்தும் உளவனைத்தும் காட்டி
உள்ளதனை உள்ளபடி உணர உணர்த்தினையே"

என்று குறிப்பிடுகின்றார். இராமலிங்கர் தம் கருத்துக்களைச் சங்கம் என்னும் அமைப்பு மூலமே பரப்ப முடியும் என்றுணர்ந்து சன்மார்க்க சங்கம் கண்டு, 1867ஆம் ஆண்டில் வடலூரில் சத்திய தருமச் சாலை அமைத்தார். ஜீவகாருண்யத்தையும், ஆன்மநேய ஒருமைப்பாட்டையும் நோக்கமாகக் கொண்டு சத்திய ஞானசபை, சித்தி வளாகம், சமரச வேதபாடசாலை போன்ற கிளை அமைப்புகளும் தோற்றுவிக்கப்பட்டன. மனித குலத்துக்கு மட்டுமல்லாமல், அனைத்து ஜீவராசிகளுக்கும், உயிர்க்குலம் முழுமைக்கும் சமரசம் காண்பதே இராமலிங்கரின் நோக்கமாகும்.

"மார்க்கம் எலாம் ஒன்றாகும் மாநிலத்தீர் வாய்மை இது
தூக்கும் எலாம் நீக்கித் துணிந்துளத்தே - ஏக்கம்விட்டுச்
சன்மார்க்க சங்கத்தைச் சார்ந்திடுமின் சத்தியம் நீர்
சன்மார்க்கம் சேர்வீர் இந்நாள்"

என்றார் இராமலிங்கர்.

சன்மார்க்க சங்கத்தின் கொள்கைகள்

சன்மார்க்க சங்கத்தின் கொள்கைகள் என்று இராமலிங்கர் பட்டியலிடவில்லை. ம.பொ.சிவஞானம் அவர்கள் இராமலிங்கரின் பாடல்கள் - வசனங்கள் - கடிதங்கள் - உபதேசங்கள் மூலமாகத் தொகுத்துக் கீழ்க்கண்ட கொள்கைகளைக் குறிப்பிடுகின்றனர்.

1. **தெய்வம் ஒன்று**

2. தெய்வத்தை ஒளிவடிவாக வழிபடுவதே சிறப்பு

3. சாதி-சமய-வருண-இன-இட-மொழி பேதங்கள் நீங்கி

ஆன்மநேய ஒருமைப்பாடு காண வேண்டும்.

4. உலகம் முழுவதும் ஆன்மநேயத்தால் ஒன்றுபடுவதோடு, இந்திய நாட்டில் மொழிவழி இனங்களிடையே சகோதர உறவை வளர்த்தல்.

5. ஏழை பணக்காரர் என்ற வர்க்க பேதமொழித்தல்

6. பால் வேறுபாடின்றி அனைவருக்கும் கல்வி, குறிப்பாகப் பெண்களுக்கு ஞானமார்க்கக் கல்வியைக் கற்பித்தல்.

7. தமிழருக்குத் தமிழ் மொழி வாயிலாகவே பயிற்றுதல்.

8. புலால் மறுப்பு - பலியிடல் மறுப்பு - தீய பழக்கவழக்கங்களை அடியோடு மறுத்தல்.

9. உயிர்கள் அனைத்தும் சமமெனக் கருதும் ஜீவகாருண்யத்தை மக்களிடம் பரவச் செய்தல்.

10. கருணையிலாத துன்மார்க்கர் அரசியல் நடத்துவதை உலகெங்கனுமொழித்து, அருள்நெறி வழிப்பட்ட சுத்த சன்மார்க்கர் ஆட்சி தோன்றச் செய்தல்.

ஆகியவையே சன்மார்க்க சங்கக் கொள்கைகளாக விளங்கின.

சாதி-சமயங்களற்ற சமுதாயம் - பொதுவழிபாடு

சாதிகளையும - சமயங்களையும் உடனடியாக ஒழித்தல் இயலாது என்பதையுணர்ந்த இராமலிங்கர் சாதி-சமயங்களிடையே நிலவிய ஏற்றத் தாழ்வினை ஒழித்து அனைவரும் - அனைத்தும் சமம் என்னும் சமரசக் கொள்கையை ஏற்படுத்த முனைந்தார்.

இச்சாதி சமய விகற்பங்களெலாந் தவிர்ந்தே
எவ்வுலகுந் சன்மார்க்கப் பொதுவடைதல் வேண்டும்

என்று அருட்பா பாடினார். சாதிசமய பேதங்களற்ற சுத்த சன்மார்க்கருக்கான ஆலயமாக சத்திய ஞானசபை - சங்கம் சார் திருக்கோயில் ஏற்படுத்தினார். எச்சாதியினரும், எச்சமயத்தாரும், எந்த இனத்தாரும், எந்த மொழியாரும் வணங்கத் தக்கதான பொதுக் கோயிலாக அமைத்தார்.

அருட்பெருஞ்சோதி தனிப்பெருங்கருணை- தனிப் பெருங்கருணை அருட்பெருஞ்சோதி என்னும் திருவாக்கொடு ஞானசபை எண்கோணத் தாமரை வடிவில் அமைக்கப்பட்டது. ஞானசபையில் ஐந்தடி உயரமுள்ள சீமைக் கண்ணாடி வைக்கப்பட்டு, அதன் முன் சிறு விளக்கு ஏற்றப்பட்டது. இறைவழிபாட்டின் போது பலவித வாத்யங்கள் ஒலிக்க ஆரவாரத்தோடு உரக்க முழங்குவதை இராமலிங்கர் விரும்பவில்லை. ஈமனநெகிழ்ச்சியோடு ஆண்டவனுடைய தோத்திரங்களை, அமைதியாக, அன்போடு பாடுவதுதான் சன்மார்க்கத்தினர் முக்கிய லட்சியத்துக்கு முற்றிலும் உடன்பாடானது என்றார் இராமலிங்கர். மேலும் தேங்காய் உடைப்பது, பூ அலங்காரம், வாகன அலங்காரம், வீதியுலா வருதல், அபிஷேக ஆராதனைகள் என்று பொருட் செலவு செய்தல் ஆகியவற்றைக் கைவிட்டுப் பணமிருந்தால் ஏழைகளுக்கு அன்னதானம் செய்யச் சொன்னார்.

வேத-ஆகம முறைகளிலிருந்து மாறுபட்டதாக சத்திய ஞானசபை வழிபாடு அமைந்தது. சாதி-சமய-இன வேற்றுமைகளிலிருந்து நீங்கிய கூட்டுவழிபாடு நிகழ்த்த வேண்டுமென்றார். தனக்காக மட்டும் வழிபாடு செய்வதை விடுத்து உலகமெலாம் வாழும்படி பிரார்த்தனை செய்ய வேண்டுமென்றார். சிறியவர் - பெரியவர் பேதமின்றி அனைவரும் சமமாகக் கூட்டுவழிபாடு நிகழ்த்துவது வேண்டும் என்று உபதேசித்தார்.

சுத்த அறிவும் தெளிவுமே சிவமாகும் என்றுரைத்த இராமலிங்கர் சத்திய ஞானசபையின் தலைவராக கருணையின் வடிவமாக சிவத்தைக் குறிப்பிட்டார். தன்னை வணங்க முற்பட்ட அடியவர்களைத் தெளிவுபடுத்தி இறைவனையே வழிபட வேண்டும் என்று காட்டினார். வள்ளலார் - அடிகளார் - சுவாமிகள் என்று தன்னைச் சுட்டுவதை அவர் விரும்பவில்லை. அவை அனைத்தும் சங்கத் தலைவராகிய சிவனையே சுட்டும் என்றார். அன்பு - கருணை - இரக்கம் - அருள் ஆகியவற்றின் மொத்த வடிவமே சிவம் என்றார். கருணாநிதியாகிய கடவுள், கருணைக் கடலாகிய கடவுள், அருட்பெருஞ்சோதி ஆண்டவர், இயற்கையுண்மைக் கடவுள், இயற்கை இன்பக் கடவுள் என்று பொதுப் பெயர்களால் இறைவனை சுட்டி நாம-ரூப-பேதங்களைக் கடந்து கடவுளை வழிபடச் செய்தார்.

ஆன்மநேய ஒருமைப்பாடு

இராமலிங்கர் தனது குறிக்கோளாக ஆன்மநேய ஒருமைப்பாட்டை வலியுறுத்தினார். இறைவனால் படைக்கப்பட்ட அனைத்து உயிர்களிடமும் அன்பும் கருணையும் கொள்ள வேண்டும். எல்லா உயிர்களிடத்தும் அன்பு செலுத்துவதே ஆன்மநேய ஒருமைப்பாடாகும். ஈஉண்மையில் கடவுள் என்பது அகிலமாம். அன்பாம் அஃது உலகில் உள்ள எல்லாவற்றிலும் பரிபூரண சமாதானத்தையும் சமரச நிலையையும் ஏற்படுத்தி அவைகளை நிலை நிறுத்துகிறதி என்றார் இராமலிங்கர். சகோதர அறம் - நடுநிலை அரசியல் - ஆண், பெண் பேதமொழிந்த அனைவருக்கும் கல்வி - அனைவருக்கும் உணவு என்ற ஜீவகாருண்ய நெறி ஆன்மநேய ஒருமையைக் கொணரும் என்றார்.

இராமலிங்கருக்கு எதிர்ப்பு

இராமலிங்கர் உருவ வழிபாட்டையோ, வேத ஆகம முறைகளையோ நேரடியாக எதிர்க்கவில்லை. அவற்றுக்குச் சொல்லப்பட்ட விளக்கங்களை மறுத்து சாதி-சமய பேதமற்ற வழிபாட்டு முறைகளை வகுத்தார். மக்கள் பேரளவுக்குப் பின்பற்றத் தொடங்கியதும், வைதிக சைவர்கள் அவரை எதிர்த்தனர். தேவார திருமறைகளும், சமஸ்கிருத வழிபாட்டு முறைகளும் நின்றுவிடுமோ என்று பயந்தனர். சமயத் துறையில் சீர்திருத்தம் காண விரும்பிய அவரை வெறுத்தனர். வடமொழியைத் தாய்மொழி என்றபோது தமிழைத் தந்தை மொழி என்றனர். தமிழ் மொழியே அதிசுலமாகச் சுத்த சிவானுபூதியைக் கொடுக்கும் என்றார். இராமலிங்கரின் அருட்பாவை மருட்பா என்று திரித்துக் கூறி இராமலிங்கருக்கு நிறைய தொல்லைகள் கொடுக்கப்பட்டன.

முடிவாக

1. சமய நிலையில் பேதப்பட்டுக் கிடந்த தமிழக மக்களை ஒற்றுமைப்படுத்தி சர்வசன்மார்க்க நிலைக்குக் கொண்டுவர இராமலிங்கர் முயற்சி செய்தார்.

2. சாதி-மத பேதங்களாலும பொருளாதார ஏற்றத் தாழ்வினாலும் ஆண்-பெண் வேறுபாட்டுப் போக்காலும் முரண்பட்டிருந்த மக்களனைவுரையும் கல்வியாலும் வழிபாட்டாலும் ஒன்றிணைக்க முற்பட்டார்.

3. வேத-ஆகம முறைகளின்றும் மாறுபட்ட வழிபாட்டு முறை, இந்து சமயத்தின் தேவையற்ற - முடநம்பிக்கைகளை விடுத்து அனைவரும் ஏற்றுக் கொள்ளத் தக்க சோதி வழிபாட்டினை வலியுறுத்தினர்.

4. பொருட்செலவு செய்து பூஜை-அலங்காரங்கள் செய்யும் முறைவிடுத்து அமைதியான முறையில் தோத்திரப் பாடல்களைப் பாடும் கூட்டுவழிபாட்டு முறையை மேற்கொள்ளச் சொன்னார்.

5. உயிர்கொலை மறுப்பு புலாலுண்ணாமை - ஜீவகாருண்யம் அன்பே அகிலம் என்னும் அன்பை முதன்மைப்படுத்தும் வழிபாட்டு முறையால் உலகமக்கள் அனைவரிடம் - அனைத்து உயிர்களிடமும் ஆன்மநேய ஒருமைப்பாடு காண விழைந்தனர்.

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3. சொ., சிங்காரவேலன் - வள்ளலார் வாழ்வியல்.
4. திரு அருட்பா திரட்டு.
5. திரு அருட்பா உரைநடைப் பகுதி.

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Religion And Popular Culture In Colonial Tamil Nadu

Dr. M. Lakshmanan*

Colonial and post-colonial ethnographic histories are full of interesting details on the religion of the Tamils.[1] Many of these studies represent what we now call an investigation of popular mentalities, to use the words of Anneles School. What was the peculiarity of the Dravidian mind? What were his religious beliefs? The Dravidian mind is said to have the characteristic of performing and handing on from generation to generation whatever progress it makes in ideas or customs, refusing to discord the old when it adopts the new.[2]

The cult of cobra, the earliest image worship, was said to be brought from Persia by the Dravidians when they migrated to the southern part of India[3]. They worshipped cobra as benevolent calling it 'nallapampu'. The origin of such worship lay in the fear of the venom it spewed. The deity probably older than the cobra was said to be 'muniswami'. The suggested interpretation of the word is the angry deity, malignant spirit. Muniswami hunted trees and houses and made his presence in a tree by the fall of a branch to the injury or danger of some below and his presence in a house by calamities to the inhabitants. When his presence was either known or suspected, prudence dictated propitiation. In the case of a tree, this was accompanied by the nightly burning of native oil lamps and occasional offerings of fruit and flowers, and in the case of a house, an annual pujah must be conducted. Failure to observe these would bring a series of dire calamities that would befall the occupier of the house. It has been argued that the cult of new images was introduced by the stream of strangers who acquired power and authority by bringing new arts and knowledge.[4]

So long as pujas without blood offerings were made to propitiate the angry gods, there was no revulsion or disgust against such rituals. Historical narratives describe the beliefs of the common people in the ghosts and evil spirits for their malignant deeds and the offerings made to them by the common people, spreading some mustard seeds around the beds of the inmates, burning camphor and incense to ward off the menace from those spirits.[5]

These spirits were not as dreadful as the power of the village deity called Mariamman or Mariatta in Tamil villages. This deity was as much capable of inflicting, if she was angry, on the individuals such infectious disease as small-pox and cholera, as of causing rich harvest, if she was appropriately

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propitiated. When she showed signs of anger, as by repeated failure of the rains, or by pestilence, she rejoiced in blood and demanded wholesale sacrifice of male animals, cocks, rams, he-goats but most of all, male buffalo[6].

The need of a benevolent and protective deity from distant past was also fulfilled by the village god Aiyanar. He is usually placed on a platform. Well-to-do villages provide Aiyanar with a miniature temple to live in, usually placed on top of any available knoll or hillock from which as extended a view as possible could be obtained.[7]

Aiyanars were of different sizes, "built of brick and mortar, covered with plaster, gaily caparisoned, each with a diminutive stature of an attendant groom, holding the horse ready for Aiyanar to mount. In some villages, Aiyanar would stand in the open air under trees or expect him to do his best with hollow horses of terra-cotta, very rudely fashioned. In this case, a new one is made for him every year and so he accumulates a considerable studs but of very sorry heads, and very few with legs".[8]

The above accounts of Mariatha and Aiyanar and their malignant and benevolent deeds were given by European authors. They were surprised at the tenacity with which the low caste members practised in the name of gods certain sacrifices, which baffled them. English education, introduction of which was thought to bring reason and science to the country, only succeeded in widening the gulf between the English educated and the illiterate. It has been argued that social communication sets off the process of political integration that increases communication among the members of an ethnic group or a people.[9] But what was witnessed in colonial Tamil Nadu was that it engendered not only hostility to Christianity which was alien but also to the lower castes who were members of the ethnic group. Within ethnic group, a consciousness of caste remained predominant. Some of the proverbs collected and published in the 1850s reveal the horizontal division of Tamil society based on caste, community and gender.

An example of gender bias is: 'Malaisutri Pen Piranthal Mammanuku Aagaathu'. For a girl to be born with a garland round the neck is deemed to be injurious to her maternal uncle. Islamic women are portrayed in much worse terms. 'Tuttukku oru kutti vitralum Tulukku Kuti Mathiram Aagathu' (Though girls may be had at a pie a head, a Muslim girl is undesirable). One saying identified higher caste with knowledge 'Agraharathi' piranthalum, Nai Vedam Ariyumma'. (Will a dog understand the Vedas even if born in a Brahaminic

village). Another deepseated prejudice identified colour with caste. 'Parppan Karuppun Pariyyan Sigappun Aagathu'. (A black Brahamin and a fair Pariya are not trustworthy)[10].

The social divide along caste, religious and gender lines was a fertile source of propaganda for conversion by missionaries. What the Europeans did by way of propaganda made the natives in these small towns and countryside to establish organizations in defense of custom and religion. In 1841, three Hindu students of the Free Church Mission's school at Madras city embraced Christianity, thereby causing a panic in the Hindu community. The Hindus, in an effort to stem the tide of missionary advance, established their own educational institutions, instituted legal suits to recover guardianship of student converts who had taken shelter with the missionaries and launched religious societies to neutralize the effects of missionary propaganda[11].

The Madras-based Suddha Veda Sidhanta Society for propagating the philosophy of the four Vedas acquired a press of its own, published a paper and numerous anti-Christian tracts. It also maintained contacts throughout the south. The Sadhu Sabha appealed to wealthy men from various clean castes and attempted to hinder the missionaries, through numerous memoranda sent to the Madras government[12]. The Hindu leaders called conversion as 'the violation of their civil and religious rights' and complained of the missionaries who were backed by a large section of the company's servants. As a reaction against conversions and converted Christians, the Sacred Ash Society was formed in the south. It marked the bodies of its initiates with the ash of Shiva's sacrifice to signify their hostility to Christianity. In Tirunelvely town, riots against Christians in 1857 focused specifically on the burial of the polluted castes in the sacred land and the procession of their biers along royal streets. Robert Frykenberg writes that these were not simply religious riots, but marked a more general resistance to perceived violations of the custom and deities of the land[13]. The 1895 riot in Kalugumalai was also related to the dispute over the Christian Nadars right to take procession through the main streets. What was once resolved through compromise between the dominant castes and low caste members,[14] always resulted in running battles and bloody encounters.

Despite this, as part of utilitarian philosophy, certain legislative measures were initiated by the colonial government to prevent some of the barbaric rituals to propitiate the gods and goddesses. C.M.Lushington, Magistrate of Tanjore (1813) and Trichy (1819) was the first company servant to strongly recommend that the practice of sati, widely prevalent in Bengal, but found

practiced in some places in Madras Presidency, be suppressed. The Madras government was not prepared to accept his suggestion but asked him to discourage the practice of sati by persuasion. The court of Directors was also against any direct intervention in so sensitive a subject as sati.[15]

The colonial government before initiating any legislative measure wanted first the building up of public opinion. This always delayed taking immediate action against barbaric rituals. It was found among the khonds living in certain parts of Ganjam district and the neighbouring districts of Orissa and Bihar that human sacrifice was conducted with the view propitiating the deity to grant favourable seasons and crops. The victims might be of any caste, sex or age. Children were purchased to be offered to the deity. Even grown-ups were kidnapped from low countries and sold. Instead of banning outright this ritual among the tribes, the Government called out the leaders of Khonds and explained to them the futility of their practices. Such persuasion had no desired effect. The Government of India passed an act of XXI of 1845 to create a special agency to prevent human sacrifice. Among the same tribes, the practice of female infanticide was also noticed. The expenses connected with the marriage were the main reason for female infanticide. The Todas in the Nilgris were also alleged to have indulged in this practice but were successful in preventing the disclosure of the practice by the Magistrate in the region. In 1870, the central act was passed to prohibit female infanficide.[16]

The Government of Madras faced a similar dilemma in reacting to the practice of hook swinging. A graphic description of hook swingingis given by the district magistrates of Madura. "Two hooks were passed through the muscles below the shoulder blades of a kallan. This was done in public, but it is believed that the muscles were first kneaded or pounded to induce insensibility and prevent hemorrhage. The man himself says there was no pain. He was swung to a height of twenty feet by the hooks to a pole fitted in the centre of a car, which was then dragged round the town. He was hung for an hour and a quarter. He was then lowered and given some arrack but says he had none previously. His voice was then full and his pulse strong. There was little or no bleeding. The hooks remained in the place, and he walked about among the crowd. The holes were then large enough to admit the little finger'.[17]

We are not here concerned about whether the swingers felt pain or no pain or were drugged before the hooks were pierced. We are concerned about the reaction of the colonial bureaucracy, and of the so called enlightened opinion to such practice in Tamil Nadu.

Hook swinging was one of 'popular' religious practices in Tamil Nadu and was practiced in connection with the deity Mariamman. 'Popular' beliefs differ from enlightened opinion, which was considered rational and was always identified with the lower orders in society. Peter Burke who made a systematic study of popular culture in the early modern Europe, defines popular culture as every one's culture, but makes a difference between elite and non-elite, cultured and uncultured in terms of their social and economic background. The 'people' did not participate in the great tradition, which included scholastic tradition, the renaissance, the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century and enlightenment. But the elite participated in popular culture as a second culture.[18]

The distinction between elite culture and popular culture or 'high' culture and low culture is very important in understanding the reaction of the colonial officials as well as of the cultured elite to the practice of hook swinging among the lower orders.

Undoubtedly the singers came from the lower castes. There were also swingers from higher castes. While information as to whether hook swinging was voluntary or not was not clear, some swingers were paid for service in some cases and some swingers paid to swing. There were also many who competed for the privilege of swinging. But, of course, some backed out.

The colonial government through its various agencies spread over the state was well informed of the practice of hook swinging, but found comfort in the fact that hook swinging did not cause bodily harm. Therefore under section 144 C.C.P. the government refused to take any action.[19]

But there were Hindu-arguments against hook swinging. It was argued that hook swinging did not have religious sanction. It was patronized by lower caste poojaris who usually worked in Mariamman temple. It was alleged that poojaris patronized hook swinging because it fetched them income and but for their selfish motive, hook swinging could have disappeared.

There was also Christian missionaries opposition to hook swinging. They argued that as part of their civilizing mission, they found that the practice was barbaric in nature and against the moral precepts of Christian religion. Hence they argued that the government should ban the practice. The interesting point was that the high caste-Hindus who once opposed the government's policy in matters of religion, joined the Christian missionaries and the government in denouncing the rites connected with hook swinging.

Some hook swinging rites were religious and were intended to bring rain and appease the goddess from bringing small pox. British ethnographers quoted the swingers as saying that the goddess was angry and have cattle constantly got sick and died. They had no proper rains or crops for years and yet they, had to pay taxes to the colonial government.

'Fear of the unknown or timidity', one official noted, 'are also most universal conditions of thought among ordinary Dravidian natives and consequently their first impulse to meet any difficulty is to offer a sacrifice. This is the basis of the whole of their natural religion'.[20]

P. Sivarama Aiyar, the Deputy Collector of Tirunelveli opined that "the practice of hook swinging had originally had its origin in that branch of the Hindu Yoga philosophy named hatha yogum which was resorted to by certain Hindus with a view to acquiring control over the mind by practicing certain physical positions... But like so many Hindu customs, what was once a practice of bodily torture performed in private for a purpose was degenerated into a public exhibition of a cruel and barbarous description."[21] Brahmins or high caste Hindus' condemnation of hook swinging should not be construed as the separation of the classes vis-à-vis the village deities. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the Brahmins and other high caste people lived in the villages and offered prayers in the temples in which low rituals and blood splitting sacrifices were performed. But as these classes acquired English education and entered into colonial service, they came to identify themselves with the class of opinion that the colonial bureaucracy expressed at times in a bizarre way. Studying the nature of reaction of the colonial state and of the high caste Hindus to some of barbaric rituals, it may be stated that religion of the poor deviant from the social and political norms of the higher castes was not resilient against the onslaught of the Brahmins and high caste non-Brahmins. Concepts of purity, power and rank, all connected with caste, were related to religious practices too. Purity and pollution were no less important in so far as priests were concerned. In some temples like Sri Paarthasarathi Swami in Triplicane, priests were not as important as the Dharmakarta who, partaking of the deity, had the capacity to resolve the conflicting interests. The sovereignty of the deity was the focus of a set of ideas concerning authority and redistribution. Here the culture of authority was linked with the power of the deity, the purity of its ministrants, and the rank of human worshippers.[22] On the other hand, the cult of villages deities had no such attributes: The authority of the village deity spread over a locality, the purity of its ministrants questioned, and the rank of human worshippers, who were mostly illiterate and lived on the margins of the society.

The conditions of living in the nineteenth century of these marginalized classes deteriorated as the colonial state by its administrative policies alienated the lower castes from the higher castes by disrupting the village economy. Free trade policies of the state affected the traditional economies of the artisan classes, weavers, potters, iron-smiths, etc. Their trade suffered as they faced competition from machine-produced goods. High revenue collections by the state discouraged investment in agriculture. Employment opportunities shrank and despair among the lower orders increased. These classes sought desperately a way out of their conditions by indulging in rituals, which they falsely believed would show them the path to salvation.

Social historians have written how in the early years of industrialization in England, Methodist preachers attempted to reap the rich harvest of neglected souls who were left uncared for by the Established Church. Sobbing, Weeping, Laughter, hysteria were common components places of Methodist fervour. In all classes, there was always a constant sense of death. When Methodist leader, John Wesley preached of death and hell, the roughest audiences were most prone to convulsions and hysteria. Methodists also preached that suffering and poverty were in the nature of things, but not inimical to monks salvation[23]. English Methodism served as an instrument of social control and as a consolation for political oppression. This led E.P. Thomson to interpret working class Methodism as a 'chiliasm of despair'[24].

Sociological theories argue that religion can delegitimise and subvert, as well as affirm, social and political norms. They suggest that religion in some contexts can serve as a weapon of the weak, an arm of resistance as well as one of domination[25].

Did the religious practices of the poor and marginalized sections of Tamil society subvert social and political norms of the elite? No doubt Western educated Indian elite considered blood cardling sacrifices as subverting Hindu religion. But, in fact, practioners of High religion not only condemned the practice of hook swinging and other rites demanding blood sacrifice, but considered the non-Brahmin Poojaris in the Mariamman temples as low castes. But whatever were the merits of condemnation of the Poojaris for their selfish motives, one important consequence was that it provided an ironic basis for the anti-priest arguments that the non-Brahmin movement appropriated twenty years later. Reform of temple administration became a crying need as the hereditary principle of appointment recognized by Dr.C.P.Ramaswami Aiyar had led to grave malpractices practically destroying the sanctity of worship in various re

ligious institutions[26]. In 1969 the Committee on Untouchablility, Economic and Educational Development of the Scheduled Castes suggested in its report that the hereditary priesthood in the Hindu society should be abolished, that the system could be replaced by an ecclesiastical organization of men possessing the requisite educational qualifications who might be trained in recognized institutions in priesthood and that the priesthood should be open to all candidates irrespective of caste, creed or race. The state Legislature of Tamil Nadu enacted the Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Amendment) Act, 1970 to give effect to the above recommendations of the Committee[26].

More than this priest-centered reform confined to elite temples, what is required is a broad based reform of culture of sacrifices involving the burial of children for a few seconds and sacrifice of birds and animals within the temple precincts. While the majority of the temples practise these rites under the influential people, similar practices are also conducted at the temples under the State controlled Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Department. While in the colonial period, the aim of the government was confined to what a scholar calls, "the policing of the tradition," [27] that of the popular government today is the removal of disabilities among the various sections and democratization of temple access to all. The government's intervention in popular religious practices, not backed by all round education and employment opportunities, would only backfire as the recent experience shows. But even these could not achieve 'secularization of the mind'.

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Role of Media in the Temple Entry Movement in Tamil Nadu

Dr. N. Seshadri*

Temple Entry was a "No Entry" area for considerable section of the people of Thamizhnadu. Seeds for the movement were sown by Vadaloor Vallal Peruman in the beginning of the 20th Century at Chidambaram Temple. *Sri Pattabirama Iyer* has done regular research on Vedas and Sastras and he proclaimed that there is no restriction for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribe people to enter the sanctum sanctorum of any temple in the country. There are 30,000 temples of cultural heritage, religious fervour and historical significance in Tamil Nadu as per Tourism Department information. However,a motivation programme was necessary for the social awakening.

In 1939 Temple Entry venture was successful in the Meenakshi Amman Koil. There was criminal proceeding against A.Vaidyanatha Iyer and his followers for this noble act. But Rajaji, the then Premier of Madras Presidency dismissed the proceedings and released them unconditionally. This is a historical decision. This appropriate action was given considerable coverage in the print media with a pinch of salt. Some orthodox people applied pressure on the British Government to withdraw the Temple Entry legislation immediately. This was counted by about forty two social organizations which at Madurai convened an urgent meeting under the chairmanship of S.Subramania Panthulu (Retired Sub-Judge) at Tilakar ground. This mammoth congregation urged the government not to withdraw the Act which was passed unanimously in the assembly. The meeting also urged the government in another resolution to give police protection for the effective implementation of this Act in *Rameswaram, Srirangam, Tiruchendur, Thirunelveli* and other places of worship.

It should be a point of relevance to mention that Rajaji himself led the temple entry movement by entering the temple of Lord Muruga in October 1939 with *V.J. Muniaswamy Pillai* (them a minister in the cabinet) who was a dalit.

The resolutions proposed by M.K.Sundaraja Iyengar and seconded by M.Narayanswamy Iyer at Madurai received excellent response and it was decided to go ahead with the programme at Srirangam along with T.S.S. Rajan. There was stout opposition. But with the mental and moral courage, the operation was a total success. This news was flashed in Dinamani in March 1940.

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In Srivilliputhur, Mrs.Rajeswari convinced the public about the programme and she was properly understood for her noble venture.

Swaminatha Sastri of Trichy, Ladapuram Guruswamy Naidu, Rathinavel Thevar, Chinniapillai, Raja Chidambara Reddiar, Y.Venkateswara Dixitar, Sir T.Desigachari and others extended their cooperation for this movement. S.P.Adithanar, Umaithanu, Karumuthu Thyagaraja Chettiar and Ramasubhu gave reasonable coverage in their newspapers and educated the masses about the removal of untouchabiity from the society as flash back news items.

At the request of Vaidyanatha Iyer, the Trustee of Brahadeeswarar Temple, Thanjavur *Thiru Rajaram Raja Saheb* granted green signal for the entry of the 'down trodden' into 90 temples under his control. The temples at **Thirumogur, Tenkasi, Tiruparankunram, Ooty, Coimbatore, Salem** and **Karaikudi** were thrown open to the entry of people.

But the reaction of the conservatives erupted here and there and today appear as if the remains of present mount vesuvius and Etra after their eruptions like morphological shapes. This could not be measured with the thermometer of law. Some of them viewed these historical events as low social rituals and religious carnivals having no sanction in high religion. So the precipitate of untouchability, dissolved in the hot water of temple entry for the time, reappeared after the exhaustion of energy. Temple entry agitation is now replied by discourse on self esteem of the dalits and religious and purlic man/women seek to boost the morale of the under caste people.

Kundrakkudi Adigalar in one of his earlier programmes over AIR Trichy made a pertinent observation under the caption "**Some thoughts from Literature**" for a duration of 30 minutes. He said that Kannappar was a staunch devotee of Lord Siva. He was able to occupy the right hand portion of Lord Siva through his service within six days. He never suffered from any complex or inhibition. But Nandanar retreated too far from the society and carried the burden of the social thorn in his mind. Adigalar appealed to the **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes** to go deep into the philosophical messages that are embedded in Saiva and Vaishnava Literature. Thiruneelagantar, Thirukurripputhondar, Thondardippodiazhwar and Thoiruppanazhwar were concrete examples for devotion and dedication to the gods. Their services were accredited by gods as well as men and hence their idols were given respectable positions in temples. He appealed to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe

people to **wither away** their inhibitions. He is coming very parallel to **Mc.Dougall, the Social Psychologist** who advocated self esteem among the oppressed.

Thiru.V.Kalyanasundaram, a staunch labour leader and a Saivite, had his own reservations about temples and their authorities. Some of the temples are becoming the treasury of burglars, robbers and thiefs. He developed aversion for against conventional ceremonies. He was of the opinion that human body and mind clubbed together connote the presence of temple within. He also expatiated on the grandeur of man in the path of Maxim Gorky than the "Man the unknown" of Alexes Carol. The telecasts of Adigalar, M.Varadarajan, Justice Maharajan, Paralai Su.Nellaiappar over AIR Trichy and Chennai were eye openers.

"Film is a window through which we can see the world" observed Benjamin Dunlop, Professor of South Carolina University. The Dravidian movement utilised cinema as an instrument to propagate their views. N.S.Krishnan through his "**Parody of Kinthan Saritiram**" in Nallathambi made a positive register about abolition of Untouchability from the society. "Parasakthi" (Goddess of Power), "Or Iravu" (One Night), "Sorgavasal" (Gates of Heaven), "Velaikkari" (Servant Maid), "Maragatham", "**Kappalottiya Tamizhan**", "**Madurai Veeran**" were excellent treatises on removal of untouchability from Tamilnadu. **Mrinal Sen**, Dada Sahab Palke Award winner of 2003 said that he was able to convince the various ladders of the society about equality of law through his films. It may be a slow pick up but an effective one. It was Director K.Subramanian who dared to preach the audience about attrocities against the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe in his celluloid literature "**Thyaga Boomi**" (Land of Sacrifice) in the forties. Kalki Krishnamoorthy presented him with a wonderful background.

Temple entry did not carry with it anti Brahmin fealings. There was no positive aversion towards the Brahmins on the basis of birth. Our revered **Kakkarji** had great admiration for Vaidyanatha Iyer. Ambedkar changed his name as Bheema Rao Ambedkar to respect his teacher. Rajaji was respected by all on the basis of performance and attitude.

"Untouchability is a crime against god and man" said Mahatma Gandhi. There is legal protection but society does not give guarantee. The press has given wide coverage about Kodiyankulam, Villuppuram, Mandai khadu and Meenakshipuram where atrocities against low caste people led to conversions

or atrocities continued to be perpetrated. People have not forgotten Keezlavenmani. It was **Indian Express Reporter** who flashed the news of Mass Conversion of the Scheduled Caste people into Islam about thirty years back. Like temple entry Samapandhi bojanam (Dining together) also has become a ritual. There is no impact. **"Dining together is not enough. Marital relations we press!"** was the demand. A meaningful demand it is from their point of view.

There was a National level conference at Delhi about "Inhuman attrocities" against Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes on 11.1.05. The Central Home Minister Sivaraj Patel, Law Minister H.R.Bharatwaj and Social Welfare Minister Ms. Meera Nayar said in one voice that the police should file F.I.R immediately, enquire within 30 days of complaint and present convicts before courts of law for punishment. The news item was given wide coverage in the print and electronic media. The voice cast of the dignitaries with visuals were also exhibited by the News Editors. Yet assimilation is very low.

Untouchability existed in a different form in the developed Countries. Negritude is a movement in America, which came into force even in 1930. It is not merely a liberation movement. It is against the white domination. **Leopold Sedar Senghor** raised his voice for the Black and was successful.

"Phoenix awakes!
From the Massacred words
It spreads its wings of poesy
And sings rhythmic rhymes!"
is the creative expression of the great man.

In 1963 a black woman was arrested in U.S.A for not offering her seat in the bus for the white. The law was subsequently withdrawn after prolonged agitation. Martin Luther King dedicated his life for the welfare of the Black, was shot dead by the maniacs.

"As long as there is caste system, reservation policy must be continued in the country until we achieve full social justice," is the Editorial in Dinamani published on 9.8.1990. The editorial pays encomiums to V.P.Singh, the former Prime Minister of our country. There is no use of conducting common running race for the lions, tigers, deers, tortoises and snails. A separate race is necessary for the snails alone. Then only it would be fair. Ofcourse, the misuse of reserva

tion policy should be prevented and the benefits should reach the intended classes.

In the late sixtees Jon Higgins, the American Carnatic music artist visited Udippi Krishnan Temple. The Battacharya did not permit him to enter the sannadhi. At that juncture he sang, "**Krishna Nee Bagane Baro**" a kirti by Purandaradasar. V.Thyagarajan, a friend and colleague of Higgins prompted him to render the master piece of the great seer. It melted the souls who gathered there. The priests with astonishment begged the singer to come in and what Kanakadasa could not achieve, the foreigner did. This may not be possible for all lower caste people, as it requires a lot of resources for Mastery of the kirti. But what is required is not mere paper laws but a change mental chemistry of the people towards the lower castes.

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Challenging Orthodoxy : The Sree Narayana Movement in Kerala

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There was a visible wave of dissent, protest and reform in the Indian Society during the late nineteenth century. Apart from religious reformation, these movements also aimed to elevate the status of the depressed classes by breaking the cake of custom. Centuries of oppression and continued slavery for generations had produced in these classes an oppressive sense of littleness and helplessness – a sense of despair. The mingling of the age-old wisdom of India with the thought-forms of the modern world has ushered a new epoch in Indian history, the foundations of which were laid by 'the great shepherds of India'. This movement for religious awakening and social transformation was 'a struggle unto life and death to bring about a new state of things – sympathy for poor, and bread to their hungry mouths, enlightenment to the people at large, and struggle unto death to make men of them who have been brought to the level of beasts by the tyranny of your forefathers'[1].

The purpose of this paper is to inquire into the strategy adopted by Sri Narayana Guru in revitalising the Izhava community of Kerala. A theoretical framework for the reforms is attempted first accompanied by an analysis of the policies of Sri Narayana Guru in reforming his community.

I

I.1 The basic requirement for bringing about change in any society is to create an awareness among those who stand to gain by the change. This awareness is caused by various factors like techno-economic changes which frequently disturb the social order. These changes, in turn, demand a re-examination of norms and values. For example, the emergence of heterodox movements in India during the sixth century B. C. may be seen as a result of the introduction of large scale iron technology and with it, urbanization. It is an admitted fact that a vital factor responsible for change is non-conformism. In any established order, there can be a few individuals who have a desire to non-conform, which finally leads to the formation of new movements[2]. Non-conformist tendencies may also stem at the ideational level due to the widening gap between assumption and reality. When the inconsistency of individuals in the established order,

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becomes apparent to others, some among the latter make an effort to correct the imperfection in order to create a new social order. Besides, the rational orientation of man also brings about change through deliberate planning. Normally, all societies prefer a moderate level of change between maximum stability and minimum instability. Though stability-factor may induce people to accept social differentiation, hierarchy of order and unequal position in terms of goals and statuses, they accept the inequalities only to a certain extent. Seeking equality is also, therefore, a seminal element of a society. An essential element for radical change is consciousness in one's/group's degraded status. The consciousness emerges when groups/individuals compare their lives to the better life of others. Infact, through new wants and aspirations, dissatisfaction becomes widespread among the lower classes. In this time of change, transitional personalities arise who have broken off their ties with the past but are uncertain about the future.

I.2 The urge to reform/change also emanates from *relative deprivation,* which acts as the bed rock of protest movements. The concept of *relative deprivation,* though used by Marx, gained currency in the forties of the last century in the study of the protest movement[3]. The notion of *relative deprivation* includes individual deprivation in its psychological dimensions and to a certain extent, it can be compared with the 'demonstration effect' in Economics. Of course, situations of personal deprivation are frivolous and endless. But if the notion is applied to the context of the basic rights of groups in terms of access to education, status, wealth, power and place of worship, it becomes meaningful. The emergence of Buddhism and the rise of devotional movements both among the Vaishnavite and Saivite sects are good examples of this genus. The establishment of *PAX BRITANNICA* boosted the awareness of deprivation in the economic, political, educational and other areas of life. The concept of individual liberty and social equality got a new momentum thanks to the English education and the spread of secular egalitarian ideology. The major reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries followed diverse themes to establish an identity and to fight for their status.

I.3. One of the ideological premises of such movements was the claiming of a higher *Varna* status as can be gleaned from the case of *Gollas* in Andhra and Karnataka, and *Konars* in Tamilnadu. Along with the *Ahirs* of North India and *Gopas* of Bengal, they claimed Kshatriya status as *Yadavas*. They follow diverse professions like milk-vendors, cattle rearers and all of them claim descent from *Yadava* dynasty to which Lord Krishna belonged. In Bihar, the

Yadavas clashed with the local Brahmins when they donned sacred thread publicly. Such efforts enriched their self image and enabled them to gain their self-respect. The Dravida Kazhagam Movement in Madras represents another theme. Apart from rejecting the Brahmanical supremacy, the movement idealized Dravidian culture and religion. Negating Hinduism altogether and embracing Neo-Buddhism was another strategy in the movement. The Mahar Movement in Maharashtra, in which Dr. Ambedkar finally accepted Buddhism by abandoning Hinduism in 1956 belongs to this category. Marxian ideology combined with anti caste-Hindu theme was reflected in the ideology of Dalit Panthers. Another interesting technique was withdrawal and self-organization. The radical change brought out by Sri Narayana Guru in the last century among the Izhavas of Kerala is a case in point. The new ideology of one God, one religion and one caste transformed their life style and outlook. The establishment of a set of religious institutions (temples, priest hood, asram etc.) parallel to that of the vegetarian variety of Brahminical Hinduism enabled the community to gain self-respect.

I.4. Another model for social change has been suggested by the anthropologist, Anthony F.C. Wallace[4]. To him, change process begins with a shift away from cultural harmony, a change that is reflected at first in the form of individual stress. Gradually this individual stress is acknowledged by the society and a process of revitalization slowly gathers momentum.

I.5. Social changes can be more intelligibly explained with the help of the *but terfly effect* in Physics[5].

> 'The flapping of a single butterfly's wing today produces a tiny change in the state of atmosphere. Over a period of time, what the atmosphere actually does, diverges from what it would have done. So, in a month's time, a tornado that would have devastated the Indonesian coast does happen. Or may be one that was not going to happen, does'[6].

In the nineteenth century Indian Society, dominated by religious superstition and social obscurantism, the wave of reform initiated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal is comparable to a butterfly flapping its wings. Within a century, the tide of reform reached the southern tip of the subcontinent. It seems that the theory of social change would be more intelligible if we integrate it with the Chaos Theory in Physics[7]. The importance of minutiae in historical events is usually dismissed by historians and social theorists who prefer to think that major developments in history have all been in some sense inevitable. Usually

small inaccuracies in the starting conditions would lead to small inaccuracies in the results. Similarly in social studies, the assumption has always been that the effects of smaller events cancel each other out and it is the balance of overall forces that determine history. There are physical systems in which small effects may lead to vast consequences, and physicists call them 'chaotic system'. Chaos theory suggests that the idea of 'cancellation' of small effects is something that *varies from place to place and moment to moment*. Any system, including the social system, may go through a period where the system "teeters" in which a small factor may have vast consequences[8].

II

The Aryanisation of Kerala foisted a caste system based on *Caturvarna* on the society. The Nambudiri (Brahmin) domination was all pervasive. Next in rank stood the Nairs, who constituted the landed aristocracy of Kerala. Below the Nairs were the polluting castes of Kerala, the most important of which was the Izhavas/Thiyyas. Though they constituted nearly 25% of Kerala's population, they were considered a backward community because of their lower position in the Hindu caste hierarchy.

II.1. The most odious aspects of the caste system were Untouchability and Unapproachability. The Izhavas and other lower classes were forbidden to use the public roads and even proper dress and ornaments were interdicted to them. They were also prohibited from walking even along the approach roads leading to temples. Apart from the social exclusion, the Izhavas were also forced to pay several unjust taxes to the State. The net of taxation was spread to their looms, oil-mills, boats, palanquins and huts. Special occasions like marriage were made an excuse for extracting levy from them. Education was denied to them and they were denied entry into the State service. The story of Dr. Palpu is a case in point[9]. Apart from these social disabilities, the community was also enslaved by many social evils like child marriage and polygamy. The strict adherence to extravaganzas like Talikettu Kalyanam and Tirandukuli[10] drained the little resources of the community. In fact the Izhava community presented a deplorable plight of a people deprived of basic civic amenities and social rights. The caste hierarchy had robbed them of their human prerogatives and continued alienation from the main stream for generations had produced in them a sense of despair.

II.2. Though the nineteenth century political life was characterised by inactivity, and the society presented an outward calmness, subversive forces were

forming and developing. This current of social transformation gradually led Kerala into the main stream of political struggle for freedom and responsible government in the twentieth century. The important outcome of this ferment was the awakening of the masses especially the lower orders of the Hindu society against social injustice and evils. This awakening found articulation in Kerala in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

III

The movement of reform associated with Sri. Narayana Guru is unique in one important respect; it is entirely constructive and devoid of any bitterness against the higher classes. All over the world, the under privileged classes, in their awakening, have manifested what may be called legitimate hostility and bitterness against the privileged. From the purely human point of view, there may be some justification for this attitude and the class hatred that it fosters. But it is detrimental to the abiding interest of social health and well being. The theory that all social progress is the result of class antagonism and class struggle is yet to be proved. It is more reasonable to hold that true progress is possible only where class-antagonism is less and emphasis on ideas and ideals which are the common wealth of all the classes is more pronounced. It is to the eternal glory of Sri Narayana Guru to have inaugurated a movement which embodies in itself this unique ideal and to have released the forces of the Spirit for the solution to the many pressing problems of even the mundane life of the people. In this, he can be compared with Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh fraternity. Except in one respect, there is striking similarity between the life and work of these two masters, who are separated by five centuries. Nanak belonged to the upper class but fraternised with and reformed the lowly and lost in Hindu Society. Narayana Guru was born with the social stigma of an untouchable among whom he worked and whose life he transformed. The so-called lowness of his birth could in no way hide or smother the richness of his native endowment. It is this wealth of native genius that enabled him to raise himself and his people above the depressing circumstances of an unjust social order.

III.1. Narayana Guru was born on 26 August 1856 at Chempazhanthi, near Trivandrum, in a typical Izhava family. The preliminary education was followed by a training in Sanskrit language which had to be abruptly abandoned due to ill health. After a short span of renunciation, the Guru started a crusade against the religious and social disabilities of his people.

III.2. One of the techniques adopted by Sri Narayana Guru in challenging the orthodox was withdrawal and self organisation. The consecration of a Hindu temple was hitherto exclusive right of the Brahmins. Sri Naryana's first revolutionary act was the consecration of a temple dedicated to Siva at Aruvippuram in 1888. An Avarna daring to install an idol with Vedic rights and establishing a new abode of God caused many eyebrows to raise[11]. Within a couple of years, the number of temples consecrated by him rose to sixty. The climax of this campaign of reform of worship in temples was the installation of a mirror for worship in the temple at Kalavamkodam near Cherthala. "The mirror pratishta is a highly intellecutalised symbol of the Guru's philosophy of Atma Vidya"[12]. The last and the most significant in this saga of temple installation was the founding of the Advaitasram in Alwaye. This asram has no temple but it is a prayer hall for all religions reflecting the Guru's ennobling mission, viz. 'One Caste, One Religion and One God for Man'. This asram became the venue of the first Fraternal Conference in 1921 where the Guru delivered his great message: 'Whatever be the difference in dress, customs or religion of individual, since they are all human beings, there can be no objection to their inter-dining and inter-marrying'. This message had far reaching impact in the society of Kerala for the eradication of caste system by the twin weapons of inter dining and inter marriage.

III.3. Narayana Guru prescribed education as the only remedy for the ills of the depressed classes. Apart from promoting the teaching of both the Sanskrit Language and the Vedic texts to the Avarnas, he also encouraged the learning of English. One of the inspiring exhortations of the Guru was 'Educate to be enlightened'. The others which went with it were 'Organise to be strong' and 'Thrive through industry'[13]. He insisted that education institutions, libraries, bathrooms with shower bath and gardens should be attached to temples.

III.4. In order to further as well as implement the Moral Law expounded by the Guru, a forum was created under the aegis of Dr. Palpu and Kumaranasan[14]. The Temple Sabha at Aruvippuram became the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam in 1903. As its name indicates, the object of this association was the propagation of Dharma. The achievement of the Yogam in its early years was the popularisation of the message of the Guru and the spiritual and social regeneration of the Izhavas and other untouchables. The Yogam addressed the problems of untouchability and that of temple entry and decided to launch an immediate movement to open Hindu temples and all public roads to the avarnas. A beginning was made at Vaikom where even the approach roads to the temple were closed to the avarnas including Izhavas. Though the objec

tive of the Vaikom Sathyagraha was not immediately achieved, it produced a durable impact. The Guru, through the Yogam made the marriage ceremony simple and urged the members to dispense with ignoble practices like Talikettu and Tirandukuli. Thus the Guru effected a root and branch reform of his community through the Yogam and even after his death in 1928, the Yogam remained the torch bearer of the Guru's ideas.

IV

The methodology of Sri Narayana Guru in challenging the orthodoxy was withdrawal and self organization. The silent transformation which he brought about in his community by adhering to the dictum 'with malice towards none and charity for all' is indeed remarkable. His crusade against untouchability and unapproachability had its fruition in 1936 with the Temple Entry Proclamation of Travancore, which at one stroke bridged the wide gulf that separated the privileged from the masses in the religion. Like Jyotiba Phule of Maharashtra, Narayana Guru was an unrelenting critic of the caste system and its consequences. In conclusion, a conversation between Gandhi and Narayana Guru may be cited. Gandhiji, in an obvious reference to *Caturvarna* and the inherent qualitative difference between man and man, observed that all leaves of the same tree are not identical in shape and texture. To this Guru pointed out that the difference is only superficial, but not in essence; the juice of all leaves of a particular tree would be the same in content[15].

End Notes

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9. Palpu, one of the pioneers in the Social Renaissance in Modern Kerala had to seek employment in the Medical Department of the Mysore Government as he was denied employment under the Government of Travancore on the ground of being an untouchable.
10. Talikettu was a mock marriage, a ceremonial tying of a marriage thread around the neck of a girl even before puberty. Tirandukuli was a rite associated with the attaining of puberty by a girl. Both the rites involved heavy expenditure.
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Perspective Of Ezhava Movement In Kerala

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Ezhava is a caste in the Hindu community in India. Ezavas are mainly based in India's southern state of Kerela. They are also known as Chovas or Thiyyas. They are the major caste in Kerala, about 25% of Kerala's population. Until the end of Royal rule, they were considered a backward community, because of their lower position in Hindu caste hierarchy[1].

In the northern district of Kerala, they are also known as Thiyyas. They are found all over Kerala basically as a cultivating class. Traditionally they are connected with growing and tapping of coconut trees. The term Chovan is believed generally as a corruption of Sevaka or servant. Ehavas belong to the working class and they were treated as untouchables[2].

Narayana Guru (1854-1928), who was born in an Ezhava community, was a great sage and social reformer of India. He transformed the social face of Kerala. He founded SNDP Yogam, a social movement in Kerela for the upliftment of the Ezhava community. Ehavas are fast improving, gaining strength economically, socially and politically. They are also considered one of the major Dravidian communities of South India. The Ezhava leaders questioned the efficacy of Hinduism, when their people were discriminated in many ways by the caste-Hindus[3].

In 19th century Kerala, the majority of Ezhavas were illiterate and made country liquor from coconut palms for a living. Narayana Guru, born into an ordinary Ezhava family near Thiruvananthapuram in 1854, became an ascetic early in life. In 1888, he challenged the hegemony of the upper castes by consecrating a stone as Siva Linga on the banks of the Nayyar river in Aruvippuram near Thiruvananthapuram. The Guru's teachings on the importance of being a good human being irrespective of religious belief heralded an era of social change among the Hindus of Kerala[4].

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A century ago, the Ezhavas, the Cherumans and the Pulayans (all lower castes of Kerala) had to keep away from upper caste like Brahmins by considerable distance. During those days, the twin evils of untouchability and unapproachability stared at them through out Kerala. In addition, their women folk were prohibited from covering their torso. The lower caste were also not allowed to enter the temples patronized by upper caste Brahmins, Ambalavasis and Nayars[5]. This civic ostracizing that was being practiced was forcing many of them to convert to Christianity. But a majority stayed back. Not only did they stay back, but they also fought back vigorously to move up the Hindu caste ladder. Kerala in many ways is an example of a state where caste is no more a barrier in the civic sense[6]. How did this remarkable translation of Kerala occur?

Narayana Guru's own caste background had made him realize that some of the practices of his own caste men were indeed repulsive. Although untouchables themselves, they too practiced untouchability on other "inferior" castes. They were steeped in superstition and were quite illiterate. They were not conscious of hygiene and were dirty in their habits. Shri Narayana Guru patiently and carefully goaded them on the path of reformation[7]. His reformation was internal at first. His method was unique in several ways. Firstly, it was a distinctly religious movement. Shri Narayana Guru very well realized that India is essentially a religious country. He therefore based his movement on temple reforms[8]. If the upper castes did not allow his folk to enter the temple, "So what?" he asked. "If they have their Siva, so do we". He quoted extensively from the Shastras to a Nambhoodri who questioned his right to open a Siva temple. Secondly, he never attacked Hinduism. He forbade violence at all levels. In fact, he very keenly observed the fact that the Church was practicing untouchability in certain cases within the church premises[9]. He very correctly diagnosed that untouchability, as a social evil, was not peculiar to Hinduism alone. Thirdly, he never attacked any of the upper castes for practicing untouchability or unapproachability. Instead, he told his folk to mend their ways in such a way that the upper caste could accept them as their equals[10].

Shri Narayana Guru exhorted the lower castes to mend their ways. He forbade animal sacrifice drinking and other social evils. Temples where animals were sacrificed were simply demolished. Such was his compassion for animals that animal sacrifice almost disappeared from face of Kerala temples. Soon, his movement started attracting young educated men who, in 1903, banded together to form the Shri Narayana Guru Dharma Paripalana Sangham. Later, this movement played an important part in the Vaikkom Temple Entry Agitation. The Guru shifted his base from Aruvipuram to Shivagiri near Varkala near

Thiruvananthapuram. The Guru set an example of simple life in this ashram by washing his own clothes and vessels. The poor were always welcome in his ashram and were given free education. He kept himself engaged by sharing the duties of the ashram with his fellow mates[11].

In December 1917, C.V. Kunjuraman, a famous Malayalam journalist wrote an editorial in Mitavadi and demanded the necessity of temple entry. On the same day, the Shri Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam, one of the social organizations of the Ezhavas, threatened to embrace other religions, if they were not liberated from the desperate socio-civic deprivations. So in 1918, the Ezhavas appealed to the Tranvancore Government to open the state temples to untouchables[12]. Activated by the fillip given by Nair leaders like Kannathy Janardhana Menon and Raman Thambi, T.K. Madhavan entered the agitation in 1919 for equality of citizenship and sought abolition of all kinds of rituals and civic disabilities[13].

In the same year, as a member of Sree Moolam Popular Assembly, T.K. Madhavan urged the Tranvancore Government to allow the untouchables inside temples. An article written by him in the Deshabhimani clearly established the right of temple entry of untouchables[14]. The entry of M.K. Gandhi into Congress in 1919 boosted the morale of T.K.Madhavan in his constant struggle[15]. In 1920 as secretary of Public Service Bureau, T.K. Madhavan made the temple entry issue as part of equality of Citizernship Movement in Tranvancore[16]. Again in 1921 in the State Assembly, he moved the issue, but could not gain expected result at once[17]. In the same year, he met Gandhi at Tirunelveli and held discussion about temple entry Gandhi also admired and blessed the success of temple entry movement in Tranvancore[18], which had an electrifying impact upon the public opinion. The progressive section of the caste-Hindus along with T.K. Madhavan began to support the movement at once. However, T.K. Madhavan felt that such a movement could not be realized without the active involvement of the political party called Indian National Congress[19]. Hence, stressed this demand in the Kakinada Congress Annual Session, held on 28th December 1923. The Kerala leaders like T.K. Madhavan, K.P. Kesava Menon and K.M. Panikkar participated in it and stressed this that all the Membes, irrespective of caste and religion on should use their strength against untouchability in the Hindu society. It adopted resolution anti-untouchability as the main item of its Constructive Programme. Another resolution was also stressed to form a separate provincial committee to undertake

the ad-hoc work[20]. After the Kakinada session, the political leader who was struggling for political freedom from the British Government slowly turned their attention towards social liberation of the untouchables[21].

The Ezhavas who were one-sixth of the entire population strong felt that such inhuman social barriers should be removed. The Congress leaders of Tranvancore looked for an opportunity to give wide publicity to such social evils. When Madhavan, a rich Ezhava lawyer was denied entry into the court located inside the palace compound of Sree Moolam Tirunal Maharajah of Travancore[22]. Congress leaders like K.P.Kesava Menon, the editor of Mathrubhumi, T.K. Madhavan, a fellow Ezhava and the editor of Deshabimani, and George Joseph, a prominent political leader took up the issue and gave wide propaganda by organizing anti-untouchability committees[23].

Thereupon, under the leadership of K.P.Kesava Menon, group of Ezhavas entered the prohibited road of Vaikom on 7th April 1924[24]. In order to revive the movement, leaders of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) decided to send a special appeal especially to reformers of Tamil Nadu. As E.V. Ramasamy (E.V.R.) the great social reformer was the president of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (T.N.C.C) he became the unanimous choice of the leaders of K.P.C.C. George Jospeh and Neelakandan Namboodiri, jointly sent a letter to E.V.R. through a courier from prison cell. Knowing its content, E.V.R. swung into action by canceling his party tour and rushed to Erode to proceed to Vaikom. E.V.R. with Kovai C.A. Ayyamuthu, Secretary of the Coimbatore CongressCommittee and a band of zealous volunteers including depressed class members proceeded from Madurai to Vaikom. Among the volunteers who had gone to vaikom, the notable was K.Kamaraj Nadar, the later Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu[20].

E.V.R. reached Vaikom on 13th April 1924 and took up the leadership of Vaikom Satyagraha. He started his agitation against social injustice. On release from Arivkkuthu prison after detention for one month, the Travancore Government issued an order to E.V.R. to leave the state at once. Ignoring the order, E.V.R. again involved himself in the satyagraha activities. At many public meetings, he lambasted the Government for the evil practice of untouchability. In an address he said, "God would not dwell in the temple at Vaikom if he feels that by the touch of the 'untouchables' the deity would be polluted. Such an idol should be removed to be used for washing clothes[26].

Due to his continuous fight for social reform at Vaikom during April and May 1924, E.V.. was arrested, put in jail for the second time and sentenced to six months rigorous impressments at Central Jail, Trivandrum. In the meantime, the satyagraha campaign received much popular support from several parts of Tranvancore as well as from all over the country. While the state authorities were much concerned with the problem of law and order, the Maharani was anxious to find a solution to the communal issue and thus bring about the cessation of the satyagraha. Then the Brahmin Dewan of the state wrote a letter to Rajaji, the confidant of Gandhi in the south, apprising him of the Maharani's wish to meet Gandhi and discuss matters relating to the satyagraha for amicable settlement. On Rajaji's suggestion, Gandhi went to Vaikom and met the Maharani on March 1925 to end the satyagraha peacefully. But the desired result was not achieved so that the satyagra continued until the prohibitory order was revoked on 23rd November 1925 and the roads were thrown open by the Tranvancore Durbar to the untouchables. It was the glorious achievement of E.V.R., called Vaikom and no wonder he was Hero by T.V.Kalyanasundaranar in his newspaper, Navasakthi and Tamil Work, Vazhkaikurippugal (Notes on Life)[27].

Due to the agitation made by E.V.R, the Maharani of Tranvancore announced the approach roads adjacent to Vaikom temple were formally opened to all Hindus irrespective of caste. But this concession was not extended to the avarnas in the case of other temples in Tranvancore. Hence movements for getting the approach roads opened to the avarnas (Untouchables) were organized in such centers as Ambalapulla, Tiruvarpu and Suchindram. The people of Suchindram were looking up to the government and the caste-Hindus for a long time to remove the nefarious custom and liberate them from the tyranny of orthodox practices, but it was all in vain. On account of this intolerable treatment meted out to the Nadars, Ezhavas and other depressed castes, they resorted to satyagraha at Sucihndram roads. Their leaders found that any amount of representation, appeals etc. Would not move the government and a few caste-Hindus. So they began to assert their birth-right by means of satayagraha[28].

The reformers in Hinduism who led the satyagrahis were mostly from the untouchables and Ezhavas. The Self-Respect League located at Nagercoil extended its blessings and heartful support to every stage of satyagraha. The peaceful movement of Satyagrahis was disturbed by the petty quarrels and minor assaults. On 12th May 1930, the Suchindram Satyagraha Committee came into operation and Gandhi Raman Pillai of Eravaiputhur led the struggle relentlessly.

The militant Hindu organizations organized religious conferences and professed the right to temple entry. In the State Legislalture also, there was continuous war of words on the continuation of religious discriminations. Addressing on the resolution moved by Aasan on the question of opening the roads, tanks, etc., K.Madhavan demanded the immediate end of all restrictions on the temple entry. As a preliminary step, the Government resolved that all roads open to the caste-Hindus were also opened to non-caste Hindus without further delay[29].

Under Narayana Guru's aegis, temples soon sprang up all over Kerala in Thrissur, Kannanur, Tellicherry, Calicut and Mangalore. He also opened an Advaitha Ashram at Akywa in Central Kerala. Besides, Narayana Gurukula was established in the Nilgiris.

The Guru was visited by two important personages of his time, namely poet Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhiji. Both men had interesting conversations with Shri Narayana Guru and acknowledged his greatness. The movement started by Shri Narayana Guru later on acted as a seed for social reformation throughout Kerala State. Legislations were passed allowing the lower castes to enter temples. The movement did such wondrous work for the community that within a short span of three generations, the Ezhavas of Kerala rose in status[30].

The Kerala of today owes a lot to the Guru for his significant contribution in removing the shackles of casteism, ignorance, superstition and above all, untouchability. Also, but for him, Kerala would have been further Christianized. The press of the day, often in their enthusiam, gives credit to both the communist movement and the Travancore Maharaja for raising the social and civic stantdards of the denizens of Kerala. Unfortunately, the real reformer, Shri Narayana Guru, rarely gets mentioned for his contribution to the society. To reform India, we need role models like Shri Narayana Guru[31].

The temples of Kerala also played an important part in the movement for eradication of untouchability which started with the famous Vaikom Satyagraha of 1924-25. Even Mahatma Gandhi was associated with this event and the result was the opening of the temple approach roads to all Hindus, which were otherwise closed to Harijans. Then there was a referendum regarding the opening of Guruvayur temple to all Hindus, in which 70 percent of the voters showed approval. Subsequently on Novembr12, 1936, the Sri Chitra

Balarma Varma, Maharaja of Travancore, issued the Temple Entry Proclamation. Within a decade, Cochin and Malabar followed suit. Thus Kerala was at the forefrant of the social and religious reforms that were to be institutionalized throughout India with independence in 1947. Thus caste associations have, by and large, arisen out of a host of historical antecedents and in the case of E.S.R.M., they included, among others, the widespread discrimination and debasement of Ehavas at the hands of the traditional savarna dominat castes.

End Notes

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Temple Entry Movement In Travancore State

N.Kumaraveni*

From time immemorial, caste system and social distinction marked the Hindu society. It was divided into two main sections – the high castes and the low castes. The Tamil Brahmins, the Malayala Brahmins better known as Nambudiris, the Kshatriyas and the Nayars were considered as high castes whereas the Tiyas or Ilavas, the Nadars, the Pulayas and the Parayas were classed as low castes.[1] Due to the existence of peculiar social customs and practices, the 'low castes' were subjected to glaring disabilities. Rights and privileges enjoyed by the caste Hindus were denied to them. Even for small crimes, severe punishments were inflicted on them.[2] Besides, ***uliyam*** or personal gratuitous services and forced labour for the Government rendered the lot of the backward communities more unenviable. Slavery also existed 'in all its hideous forms'.[3] Denied of even the basic comforts of life, they found themselves reduced to a degraded status.

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British residents and some of the maharajas sought to relieve the backward communities from their ordeal. In 1812 advised by Col. Munro, the Resident and Diwan, Rani Lakshmi Bai (1810-1815) issued a proclamation prohibiting the purchase and sale of slaves.[4] However, as slavery continued to exist, the Christian missionaries in Travancore presented a petition to Maharaja Swati Tirunal (1829-1847) on 19 March 1847 proposing the entire and immediate emancipation of all slaves.[5] In recognition of this petition and under pressure from the Madras Government, Maharaja Utram Tirunal (1847-1860) issued a royal proclamation on 24 June 1855 abolishing slavery altogether in Travancore.[6] Yet, members of the backward classes were not allowed to use the roads open to the higher castes, to approach within a certain distance of courts and public offices, to admit their children at public schools and to serve in public services. On 23 April 1870, the Government of Madras issued an order giving the accessibility of judicial facilities to all people. Directed by the Madras Government, Travancore extended this privilege to the backward communities.[7] Still, they were excluded from some of the streets, villages, public offices and public schools.[8]

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Determined to gain equal rights and privileges, the backward communities, led by T.K. Madhavan, formed an association called the Civic Rights League in 1919. Branches of the League were opened at several places in the state. Mass meetings were held in many places in support of the movement.[9] For fear of the spread of the agitation, Diwan Krishnan Nayar (1913-1919) agreed on 21 February 1919 'to give appointments on merit and not on the basis of caste, creed or colour'.[10]

Meanwhile, the Christians demanded equal rights. On 1 March 1919 led by K.C.Mammen Mappilai, they presented a memorial to the Diwan mentioning the denial to them of appointments particularly in the Land Revenue Department, which employed a large section of public servants. As the Land Revenue Department dealt with the ***devaswom*** or temple properties in addition to land revenue, the Christians and Muslims were excluded from admission to its higher ranks on the basis of religion and the 'lower castes' like Ilavas on grounds of caste.[11] As a remedial measure, they wanted the separation of the temple administration from the Land Revenue Department. On behalf of the Civic Rights League, E.J.John, an active Congress member, submitted another memorial to M.Krishna Nayar, the Diwan, referring to the exclusion of the Ilavas, Christians and the Muslims from the Land Revenue Department, Imperial Service Brigade and the Government Students' Hostel [12] and threatened to launch an agitation unless their grievances were redressed. The Government appointed Krishna Iyengar, Forest Settlement Officer, to examine the possibility of separating the two departments. On the basis of his report, Maharaja Sri Mulam ***Devaswom*** from the Revenue Department.[13] The ***Devaswom*** Proclamation, as it was called, represented a step towards the realization of equal rights by the different communities.

Subsequently, their sphere of activity began to change. Supported actively by the Congress leaders of Malabar, the 'lower castes' wanted the eradication of untouchability and the right of entry into temples. The Vaikkam satyagraha marked a move in that direction. In 1923 the Congress Session at Kakinada passed a resolution for taking effective steps in this regard. The Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee entrusted the work to K. Kelappan Nayar, T.K. Madhavan, Kurur Nilakantan Nambudiripad, T.R.Krishnaswamy Iyer and K. Velayedha Menon. In their attempt to spread the ideals among the masses, they conducted propaganda tours and public meetings at several places. In a meeting held at Quilon on 6 February 1924 it was resolved to work for temple entry for the Harijans and for their freedom of movement on all public roads.[14] Accordingly on 30 March 1924, a satyagraha campaign was started in front of

the temple at Vaikkam in central Travancore. A band of volunteers led by K.P. Kesava Menon walked to the temple precincts but were served with ban orders by the District Magistrate. In defiance, batches of volunteers staged satyagraha and courted arrest.[15] The Kerala Hindu Sabha, the Nayar Service Society, the Kshatriya Mahasabha, the Yogakshema Sabha, the leading social organizations, extended their support to the movement.[16] Volunteers from different places took part in the satyagraha. A band of volunteers of Madurai led by E.V.Ramaswamy Naicker reached Vaikkam, but were arrested.[17]

On 7 August 1924 Sri Mulam Tirunal, the ruler, passed away and Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai (1924-1931) was proclaimed Regent. Advised by Gandhi, the satyagrahis decided to meet the Regent in person and to submit a memorial. Two *jathas*, one led by Mannathu Padmanabha Pillai from Vaikkam and another led by M.E. Naidu from Suchindrum in south Travancore reached Trivandrum on 1st and 7th November 1924 respectively. A deputation of the volunteers under the leadership of Changanacherry K. Parameswaran Pillai waited upon the Regent and submitted a memorial.[18] The Regent agreed to consider their grievances favourably, but as this appeared unsatisfactory, they continued the picketing. On 10 March 1925 Gandhi visited Vaikkam and as a result of an agreement reached between the Government and Gandhi, all roads excepting those on the eastern side of the temple, were opened to the *avarnas* [19] with effect from 7 April 1925. Now they continued the satyagraha on the road in the eastern side, but was with-drawn, on the advice of Gandhi on 23 November 1925. [20] The Vaikkam satyagraha, which assumed all India significance greatly contributed to the social awakening in the state.

This was followed by a forcible demand throughout the state for temple entry. In January 1926 a similar satyagraha campaign was organised at the Suchindrum Temple in South Travancore for gaining the right of entry into the roads around it for the Harijans.[21] Led by M.E. Naidu, the satyagraha continued for about a month and was withdrawn on receiving assurances form the Government.[22] However, on account of the pressure exerted by a few orthodox Hindus, the Government evaded the issue. In October 1927, Gandhi visited Travancore again and held discussions with Diwan M.E.Watts on the question. He tried to seek a peaceful settlement of the Suchindrum agitation, but failed. In consequence, the campaign was resumed in May 1930. Gandhi Raman Pillai, who led the satyagraha, was arrested and agitators were prevented from entering the streets around the temple.[23]

By this time, the problem of 'untouchables' became a matter of concern to the Congress leaders. In a conference of the Indian National Congress held at Bombay on 25 September 1932 they passed the following resolution: "…..that henceforth, amongst Hindus no one shall be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth and that those who have been so regarded hitherto will have the same right as other Hindus in regard to the use of the public wells, public schools, public roads and all other public institutions….. that it shall be the duty of all Hindu leaders to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so called untouchable classes, including the bar in respect of admission to temples.[24]

On 8 November 1932 Government, bowing to mounting opposition to its policy, appointed a committee with V.S.Subramonia Iyer, retired Diwan of Travancore, as president, to enquire and submit a report on this issue. In its report dated 11 January 1934 the Committee recommended measures for the upliftment of the ***avarnas*** educationally, socially and economically and suggested that 'distance pollution or ***tindal*** [25] should be removed by appropriate legislative measures, subject to reservations in the matter of entry into temples and into their adjuncts like temple-tanks, wells, etc. [26] The Government accordingly, decided to throw open all public roads, public tanks, public wells, etc., to all communities. [27]

Yet, the campaign for temple entry continued under the auspices of the Kerala Provincial Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, an organization formed for the upliftment of the depressed classes. It organised an All Kerala Temple Entry Conference at Trivandrum on 9 and 10 May 1936.[28] The conference urged upon the Government to open all state controlled temples to Harijans and decided to send a deputation to wait upon Maharaja Sri Chitra Tirunal (1931-1948) and to present a memorial. On 8 October 1936 C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer was appointed Diwan. On 3rd November the deputation which consisted of M. Govindan, K.G. Kunjukrishna Pillai, K.P. Nilankata Pillai, V. Atchuthan and G. Ramachandrean waited upon the Diwan and submitted a memorial, signed by 50,522 people of the 'high casts', praying temple entry for the Harijans. [29] Advised by the new Diwan and following the example of Cochin, the Maharaja issued the Temple Entry Proclamation on 12 November 1936. [30] This progressive reform, throwing open all temples to the Harijans and backward classes, was widely welcomed. Acclaimed as the 'most beneficent and epoch-making reform introduced in Hindu Society'[31] it brought about a healthy change in thereligious and social life of a large section of the people.

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Gandhiji's View On "Temple Entry Movement"

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"If we are to make progress we must not repeat history;
But make new history" - **Mahathma Gandhi**

Introduction

Gandhi viewed constructive programme as the only programme in rural reconstruction and in building up the nation non-violently from the bottom upward, despite its several limitations. Furthermore, it can revive all that is good in old traditions and rebuild the social life on sound, scientific and spiritual values and finally result in village Swaraj.

The initial elements of constructive programmme in 1920 were promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity, prohition of untouchability, promotion of Khadi and other village industries and making arrangement of village sanitation and Nai Talim (basic education) etc. Temple entry by people belonging to the lower strata in society formed an important phase on the Social Reform Movement in India. Temples are placed where gods are supposed to dwell. But certain segments of people in Hindu society like the Nadars and the untouchables were not allowed to enter temples to worship gods and goddesses.

Significance of Caste System

Gandhi defended caste as an essential form of social organization and for the best possible adjustment of social stability and progress. The interdependence of dalit and caste Hindu societies is crucial. The two societies are organically linked with each other. Caste was to Gandhi, an extension of the principle of the family, as both were governed by blood and heredity. But he warned that it must not connote superiority or inferiority; it must only recognize different outlooks and corresponding modes of life.

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Gandhi's Ambition

Gandhi wanted Harijans to be given the same opportunities as other human beings, whether caste-Hindus or not, and the same right to use public roads, schools, hospitals, wells, taps, parks and the like. He called the attention of every Indian "to end the tragic and shameful discrimination", and requested them to lend a helping hand to the unfortunate victims of social oppression. Also Gandhi's ambition was to reintegrate the untouchables within the social and cultural life of caste Hindu society. Gandhi dedicated his entire life to the service of the Harijans, "the children of god". He identified himself as a Harijan sympathiser. He undertook the work of a scavenger and stayed with them in Delhi and Bombay in 1946. In the name of Hinduism and in the name of an independent and prosperous India, he appealed to everyone to remove the practice of untouchability. He fasted and he was even prepared to sacrifice his life for the "noble cause of removal of untouchability" or as a penance for the atrocities and wrongs committed by his country people in the name of religion.

What is Temple Entry Movement?

Mahatma Gandhi started a spiritual movement known as the 'Temple Entry Movement' and he wanted to give facility to everyone irrespective of caste distinction. The temple worship is another kind of spiritual cultural movement for the benefit of the ordinary class of people. This movement, which was the main pillar of his universal popularity and it, is different from communal religiosity. A part of this movement is the "Harijan Movement".

Gandhi and the Vaikom Satyagraha

In Vaikom Satyagraha, Gandhi declared firmly that "untouchability is a crime" and campaigned for the cause of "the unapproachables and the untouchables and for the recognition of the most elementary human rights". The Vaikom Satyagraha started in 1924 on behalf of the untouchables of Travancore State, and lasted for sixteen months. Gandhi realized that human rights begin in small places and where human beings seek justice and equal dignity without discrimination. It was the Vaikom Satyagraha which for the first time revealed the depth of the evil of untouchability in India. In the early Vedic period, the Sudra population did not suffer highly. But in later Vedic times, they progressively lost their rights and have been deprived of elementary human rights. It has been subjected to indignities. Untouchables shadows were supposed to

pollute the upper castes, especially Brahmins. They were segregated from society in every way. They were compelled to live in sordid surroundings outside of the habitat of the caste-Hindus. They were denied the basic human and civic rights. They had to take up all kinds of menial jobs. And yet the jobs that they performed were indispensable to society such as that of agrarian works and other labour services. They were paid poorly and were constantly in debt and they became bonded slaves. They were economically exploited, socially ostracized and politically deprived.

In 1925 in the Travancore State there were about a million Ezhavas, three hundred thousand Pulayas and three hundred thousand Pariahs. They along with the Shanars, Kuravas, Maravars, etc., all belonging to the working class, constituted about one sixth of the population of Travancore State. Gandhi's contribution to Vaikom Satyagraha, which was intended not to get the temples opened to harijans, but only to get the roads surrounding the temple opened for the free passage of untouchables, was an eye-opener to all India. His subsequent work in connection with Guruvayoor temple entry and the constant appeals persuaded the king of Travancore to proclaim the opening of all temples under his control for worship by untouchables.

The Goal of Temple Entry Movement

The goal of the Vaikom Satyagraha was the use of the road to the temple by the untouchables. But the essence of the goal was to win the basic human rights of a section of the community who were subjected to injustice and indignity because of a blind tradition and ignorant custom docilely accepted by the Hindu society based on birth and occupation. It is in fact a movement to purify caste by ridding it of its most harmful result". Gandhi reiterated: "It is not to be denied that the present movement throughout India is to open to the suppressed classes all the public roads, public schools, public wells and public temples which are accessible to Brahmins. He stressed the word "Public" because all human beings were covered by this word, Public.

For the absolute abolition of untouchablity, he was not satisfied with the opening of all temples and places of worship to Harijans, or free inter-dining or inter-marriage with them; he wanted a change of heart in every individual, a "reform from within".

Conclusion

By all of the above processes, Gandhi wanted to establish a greater human society. His idea of a casteless society could only be given a shape under the guidance of the principles of Bhagwat Geeta. The caste system is nothing but a classification of men. It is not therefore bound up within the walls of India but this is present all over the world under different names. People should be given equal chances and equal facilities.

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Gandhi, Ambedkar, Phule, Naryana Guru and Periyar - Role of Social Reformers

Dr.M.Thavamani*

Hindu religion has many manifestations such as *Veda based Aryan religion*, indigenously designed *Dravidian* and *Tribal religions*, truncated views of various reformers and others. Hindu religion today is mixed with all these heritages. However, Periyar and Ambedkar are the *only two* who rejected Hindu religion because it is associated with the caste system and untouchability. Thus Temple Entry Movements are the entry points not only for the temple but also for social reform and eliminating social evils.

The protests created by Buddhism, Jainism and Bhakti cults formed the base on which Gandhi, Ambedkar, Phule and Periyar picked up their standpoints. The former two are referred to at the national level, the latter two are referred to at the regional level. In the context of TamilNadu, inspite of the *Dravidian rule* for the past 35 years, the conditions of untouchables have not improved substantially. (Gail Omvedt). The same is the case in Maharastra in spite of being ruled by *Hindutva*-biased leadership.

One of the explanations given to this failure is said to be the bourgeois-oriented vision and not the proletariat-oriented vision. Thus the notion of Non-Brahmin movement has turned out to be an illusion.

A second explanation is associated with the historical context of these movements. During the 19th century, mass mobilization was not possible in favor of the downtrodden. Though Ambedkar was capable of doing it, he was branded as the "Dalit leader" and therefore mass mobilization was not possible, except in Maharastra. During the "Hindu – Mahar riots" of 1940s, Dalits defended themselves against the OBC. The self-designated "Harijians" were trying to organise a rally in 1941 on the lines of Gandhian satygraha but this was exposed by Mahars.

Identity Crisis within Hindu Religion

Two traditions of Indian religion are identified as *'Great Tradition'* and *'Little traditions'*. Vedic – Sanskrit – based Hinduism is the root for "Great

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tradition" which is at the national level. The non-vedic cultural traditions of Bahujans and Dalits or Adivasis or linguistic minorities at the regional level emerged as the counter to the Great Tradition. Thus the question ofTemple Entry is more associated with the *'Great tradition'* (Shiva and Vishnu), because *'little tradition'* is already a part of the masses.

Jotirao Phule (1827-90) developed an effective movement against Brahminism and Hinduism in Maharastra by rejecting the *"fictitious world of Hindu religion"* (O' Hanion, 1985 : 105). Thus voice was raised by *"Truth Seeking Society"* – Satyashodhak Samaj which was oppressed by the then religious authority and administration.

E. V. Ramasamy Naicker was much more effective in inspiring the masses on rationalistic thinking and founded the *"Self-respect movement"*.Burning the manusmirti, abusing the theists and idols became a part of its strategy. However the D.M.K, followers of Periyar could capture the government but could not succeed realizing the Periyar's vision.

The interesting debate between **Gandhi** and **Ambedkar** was about the nexus between Hinduism and untouchability. Gandhi wanted to save Hinduism and abolish untouchability from Hinduism itself. *"For Gandhi, Hinduism and the caste system were not negotiable. But Ambedkar rejected both Hinduism and the caste system as well as the claims of upper caste to represent the dalits. For Gandhi untouchability was an evil within Hinduism, to be reformed by Hindus. For Ambedkar, upper-caste leadership over dalits was abhorrent* (Ghose). For Dalits everywhere, he is the symbol of their struggle.

The lower caste people of Kerala were prevented from entering into temples. While most of them were *'untouchables,'* some them of were *'unseeable'* and *'unshadowable'* They were some–what letter than their counterparts in other states. They were **Vaidyas, Sanskrit – scholars,** land owners, and small businessmen. Some of them hailed from the martial tradition of **chekkkavar warriors** of **Malabar**. These pollution laws were applicable only to Hindus. If they are converted Christians orMuslims, then these laws are not applicable.

Sri Narayana Guru, unlike Ambedkar and Periyar, inspired the oppressed to gain self-respect and become worthy **through education and hard work.** He overturned the entire social system of Kerala without creating ani

mosities and reverse oppression **because it was brought about within the framework of Hinduism.** Today Kerala is a model of egalitarianism where casteism and discrimination are completely absent (Rajeev Srinivasan) The role of left parties and non – Hindus are also instrumental in this change.

The **108 questions** framed by Dr. Deivanayagam and Dr. Devakala to **Sankara Mutt** raised the eyebrows of many Dravidians. They are, "Siva worship", "Veda Vyasa is a Dravidian," "Siva as the God of Sudras", "Brahman concept opposes Kumarakadavul" etc. The 135 the most significant question is given below.

"You have been plotting against the three groups of Dravidian communities such as Backward class people who have been enslaved as Sudras, the Scheduled class who have been kept as untouchables or the Panchamas, and the religious minorities who were converted because of your oppression and making them to fight against each other, and through associate organizations like the R.S.S. and Brahmin Samaj, you have been plotting through so many strategies to trouble, destroy and plunder the Dravidians in liberated India. This is confirmed by the secret circulars of these organizations, which are found in the appendix. Can you refute this?" (www Dalitsan.org.)

To summarize, the question of Temple entry is focusing on 'Great tradition' of Hinduism and not on 'little tradition'. There are many questions to be answered even at that level (Deivanaiyagam and Devakala). The social conditions of little tradition are not yet improved eventhough they are more in number but scattered in remote areas. If a new history were written, keeping in view the little tradition and their religio – social – power aspect, that would be welcomed by all scholars.

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Role of Social Reformers in Maharashtra

Dr. R. Vivekanandagopal*

Introduction

From time immemorial, as we understand, Dalit movements have remained a short lived phenomena and the Brahaminical forces have cunningly succeeded in overshadowing it. We know that ours is a divided house and a victim of social system of graded degradation, devised and imposed on our society by the Brahmanical forces under their policy to divide and fool to rule. Our innocent ancestors were trapped in their vicious circle of "Bhagya and Bhagwan" and remained in shackles for generation after generations. Thus enslaved mentally, we could not get rid of it and generation after generation our ancestors have brought up this foster -child of Brahmanism. There was no respite of this bondage nor our people have ever tried to get out of it.

It is the pertinent question, as to how all this happened and practiced for centuries?" One can make fool some of the people all the time, all the people some of the time, but one cannot make fool all the people all the time", as has been said by Abraham Lincoln. To our utter surprise and astonishment, our ancestors have been set forth a peculiar example of being fooled for centuries by this little bunch of knaves. There would have been certainly a central force of the Aryans behind the sustenance of this operation and suppression. It could be the force of Shankaracharya or Manuism which did not allow us to revolt against this evil. The central force of their intellectuals and the youth have kept them busy and devising the mechanism of despising the millions of this country by way of imposing their traditions, customs and usages etc. Thus subjected, we are being subjected to harassment, humiliation and even victimization for nothing but the stigma of caste. It does not matter whether we are educated and well placed.

These Brahminical forces have identically treated the religious minority, particularly, the Muslims, Christians etc. The reasons are obvious, the Muslims of India did not come from Saudi Arabia, Turkey or Iran. They are mostly pre-Aryan Dravidians (dalits) who got them self liberated through Islam. And so the Christians, the Sikhs and the Buddhists of India are not the outsiders but the indigenous people. The rabid Hindu organization has been vigorously and

* Marathi-Modi Expert, Sarasvati Mahal Library, Thanjavur.

periodically resorting to the violent communal riots on the Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and the Sikhs. Thus the ultimate aim of these rabid Hindu organization is to enforce Hindu dictatorship before which Hitler Nazi rule will pale into insignificance. The brahminical dictatorship, if established or politically empowered, will crush the backwards (dalits) castrate the Muslims and the other religious minorities.

After the Independence and even after the departure of Baba Sahib Dr. Bheem Rao Ambedkar, the Dalit movement has taken its prominence in the form of R.P.I etc., but it too faded away and finally subsided, the reasons are best known to one and all. The same way Dravidian -movement of the south has lost its luster. Why does this always happen to our movement and efforts? Why are our efforts for uniting ourselves being foiled and prevented? We lack a central organization of intellectuals and the youths as is the case of brahminical forces, which can undertake policy planning and its implementation, issue directions to its cadre and above all generate the future leadership of the country and Bahujan Samaj in particular. In the absence of such a central organization, the Bahujan Samaj failed to produce a leadership except a few i.e. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Sahu Maharaj, Narayana Guru, Periyar E.V. Ramaswami Nayakkar, Baba Sahib Dr. Bheem Rao Ambedkar and Sane Guruji.

Social Reforms in Maharashtra

Maharashtra has long traditions of social reform movements and its literature abounds with support for such movements. The tradition goes back to the middle of the 12th Century, when saints like Danyaneshwar and Tukaram brought religion to the common people, at a time when it was the bound within the exclusiveness of the upper caste Brahmins.In the 19th Century, at a time when world wide aggression of imperialism was reaching its zenith and India was subjugated to British Imperial Rule, other leaders then set in motion the reform movement which had also functioned as one of the pillars of the Indian Freedom Movement. Leading lights of the reform movement included Mahatma Phule, Chatrapati Sahu Maharaj, Justice Ranade Babasaheb Ambedkar and Sane Guruji. Mahatma Gandhi was the National Leader of the Indian Freedom Movement but he did lead the Movement to a vast extent from this part of the country.

Jothirao Govindarao Phule

Jotirao was born in 1827 in Pune. His ancestors were from Katgun, a village near Satara and his grandfather settled in Pune. Jotirao's mother passed away when he was one year old. After completing his primary education, Jotirao left the school and helped his father in the farm. Jotirao's marriage was celebrated when he was not even thirteen. Impressed by Jotirao's intelligence, his neighbours persuaded his father and allowed him to study in a Secondary school. After completing his secondary education in 1847, Jotirao decided not to accept a job under the Government.

He occupies a unique position among the social reformers of Maharashtra in the nineteenth century. While other reformers concentrated more on reforming the social institutions of family and marriage with special emphasis on the status and right of women, Jotirao Phule revolted against the unjust caste system under which millions of people had suffered for centuries. In particular, he courageously upheld the cause of the untouchables and took up the cudgels for the poorer peasants. He was a militant advocate of their rights. The story of his stormy life is an inspiring saga of a continuous struggle, which he waged relentlessly against the forces of reaction. Though some keen observers of the social scene in Maharashtra like Narayan Mahadeo Parmananda did acknowledge his greatness in his lifetime, it is only in recent decades that there is an increasing appreciation of his service and sacrifice in uplifting the masses.

Satya Shodhak Samaj

Jotirao's deep sense of commitment to basic human values made it difficult for him to restrain himself when he witnessed injustice and atrocities committed in the name of religion by those who were supposed to be its custodians. On 24 September 1873, Jotirao convened a meeting of his followers and admirers and it was decided to form the 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' (Society of Seekers of Truth) with Jotirao as its first president and treasurer. Every member had to take pledge of loyalty to the British Empire. The main objectives of the organisation were to liberate the Shudras and Ati Shudras and to prevent their exploitation by the Brahmins. All the members of the Satya Shodhak Samaj were expected to treat all human being as children of God and worship the Creator without the help of any mediator. The Membership was open to all and the available evidence proves that some Jews were admitted as members. In

1876 Jotirao refused to regard the Vedas as sacrosanct. He opposed idolatry and denounced the chaturvarnya. In his book Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustak published in 1891, his views on religious and social issues are given in the form of dialogue. According to him, both men and women were entitled to enjoy equal rights and it was a sin to discriminate between human being on the basis of sex. He stressed the unity of man and envisaged a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity. He was aware that religious bigotry and aggressive nationalism destroy the unity of man. One of the charges levelled by Jotirao against the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj, the Sarvajanik Sabha and the Indian National Congress was that despite their programmes, in reality, they did very little to improve the lot of the masses. He felt that these organisations were dominated by the Brahmins and were not truly representative in character. In his booklet called Satsara (The Essence of Truth) published in June 1885, he criticised the Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj. Addressing their leaders he declared, 'We don't need the help of your organisations. Don't worry about us' in his book, Sarvajanik Sabha or the Indian National Congress. He warned that the persistent demand made by these organisation for Indianisation of the administrative services, if accepted, would lead to Brahminisation of the service in India.

Throughout his life. Jotirao Phule fought for the emancipation of the downtrodden people and the struggle which he launched at a young age ended only when he died. He was a pioneer in many fields and among his contemporaries he stands out as one who never wavered in his quest for trust for and justice. Though he was often accused of fomenting hatred between the non Brahmins, very rarely an attempt was made to consider his scathing criticism in a broad perspective.

There is some controversy about whether Phule believed in God. He did strongly feel that he did not believe in God. None of his concepts agree with the traditional concepts of God, Allah or Ishwar, as is believed by others as the supreme being. He used the word "Nirmik", which literally means Creator. He did not believe that Nirmik gets happy by the offerings nor we needs the middle men to interact with humans. From the account of various Avatars, he did not believe in the theory of Avatars either. If anything, he ridiculed it.

The names of real gods of dalit bahujans in today's terminology and "shudraatishudra" of Phule's terminology are mentioned in "Slavery". After the disappearance of Vedic Gods like Indra, Varun and Agni, the gods like Brahma, Vishnu or Mahesh or the avataras like Rama and Krishna or the more

recent deities like Gauri and Ganpati are said to be Hindu gods. None of these was known to masses, whose gods had alaways been different from Brahmanic gods. Phule has given some of the names prevalent in Maharashtra. These are Jotiba, Khandoba, Bahiroba etc. As is well known, Phule's name Jotirao is not evolved from "Jyoti" meaning flame. It is based on a god's name "Jotiba".

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Ambedkar was born on 14th April 1891. His full name was Bhimrao Ambavadekar. When he was still at school, he felt the sting of 'untouchability'. He could not sit with the other students of the class. He had to drink water only when others poured it for him; and even then he had to cover his mouth with one hand. The boy felt 'untouchability' was a black mark on Hindu Dharma; he made up his mind to remove it. Ambedkar passed his Matriculation examination. He was then seventeen years old. The same year his marriage with Ramabai was celebrated. Their marriage took place in a shed in Byculla Market. Ambedkar passed his Intermediate Examination from Elphinstone College. He obtained his B. A. degree in 1912. Ambedkar's father died in 1913. Ambedkar was then working under the Maharaja of Baroda. The servants in the office would not hand over the files to him, they threw the files at him. No one in the office would give him water to drink. He could not get a house to live in. Even though he complained to the Maharaja, it was useless. Even non-Hindus did not treat him properly. This incident opened a new chapter in the social life of India. The Maharaja of Baroda sent Bhimrao Ambedkar to America. In America Ambedkar had the experience of a new life. Ambedkar wrote very learned dissertation which obtained his M. A., degree.

He returned to India on the 21st of August 1917. There is one thing to note in the years of Ambedkar's education. He studied English and Persian languages in India. In America he studied Political Science, Ethics, Anthropology, Social Science and Economics. In this way he studied many subjects. He obtained his doctorate. In 1920, Ambedkar left for London for higher studies. In 1922 Ambedkar became a barrister and the next year he came back to India. By this time there were signs that the Hindu Society was beginning to understand that 'untouchability' is unjust.

Sahu Maharaj of Kolhapur made arrangements for the free education of the 'untouchables' and secured jobs for many of them. In 1924, Veer Savarkar, a great fighter for freedom, was released from the Andaman prison. He also began to fight against 'untouchability'. Mahatma Gandhi also was taking practical steps to wipe out 'untouchability'.

So what he upheld and advocated as a basis of human society is the freedom to co-relate with the unknown the way one wants to. This is where he accepted the Hindu viewpoint, not just for India, but for the entire planet. But, at the same time, he completely rejected the unjust castiest social structure associated with Hindu society. He was ready to physically fight against caste prejudice and casteist biases, fight for temple entry, fight against untouchability, endogamy, and all other practices associated with the dehumanizing caste system of Hinduism.

Many sensible Hindus condemned these actions. They began to say that there is nothing wrong in the 'untouchables' taking water from wells and tanks. Should Not Hindus, Who Seek Justice, Give Justice? The 'untouchables' are Hindus. Therefore the doors of temples should be open to them. If the Hindus can touch the Christians and the Muslims, why should they not touch the people who are themselves Hindus and who worship the Hindu gods? This was Ambedkar's argument. He gave a call that people who practise and support 'untouchability' should be punished. Some people argued that the 'untouchables' were not yet fit for equality. The Hindus say that they want independence and democracy. How can a people who have trampled upon all the liberties of a backward group aspire to democracy?

Ambedkar argued like this and thundered that these people had no right to speak of justice and democracy. In 1927 there was a big conference. It resolved that there should be no caste differences in the Hindu Dharma and that people of all castes should be allowed to work as priests in temples. The Chowdar Tank dispute went to the court. The court decided that tanks are public property.

Ambedkar In Action

The 'untouchables' who have been subjected to humiliation for hundreds of years should find justice. For this purpose Ambedkar indicated a few clear steps. No section of the Hindus should be kept out of temples. There should be more representatives of the 'untouchables' in the legislatures. These representatives should not be nominated by the government. They should be elected by the people. The government should employ the 'untouchables' in larger numbers in the army and the police department.

Ambedkar's entire life was dedicated to one purpose securing justice and equality to those people who are called 'untouchables'. He had said many

times, "God will spare me till I complete my work for the 'untouchables'." He lived to see 'untouchability' declared a crime. The 'untouchables' had secured political equality. They should enjoy social equality also - this feeling was beginning to grow in the country. As early as in 1951, Ambedkar's health had begun to fail. Yet he continued to work saying that he would not succumb to ill health when there was work to be done. On 6th December 1956 he breathed his last. Thousands and thousands of people 'watched the funeral procession and expressed their sorrow and admiration. Five hundred thousand people witnessed the last rites.

Sane Guruji

The Temple Entry Movement started by the downtrodden and dalits in India was the first step against the Brahmins who dominated the living hereditary people. Sane Guruji was leading a campaign for Harijans to gain entry into the temple of Vittobha at Pandharpur. Though the temple is the chief pilgrim center or the varkari sect, which has challenged caste rules in many ways, only the higher castes could actually enter the temple. In 1947, Sane Guruji began a fast-unto-death at Pandharpurand succeeded in gaining Temple entry for Harijans.

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Ambedkar And Kalaram Temple Entry Movement

Prof. S. Maria Packiam*

"Lost rights are never regained by begging and by appeals to the conscience of the usurpers, but by relentless struggle". – Ambedkar.

Introduction

Twentieth century witnessed a number of protest movements. The year 1930 was a year of action and reaction in the history of India. It was the age of Satyagraha. It was in this year that Mahatma Gandhi inaugurated his great movement for the liberation of the country on March 12, 1930 and transformed the whole country into a theater of passive resistance. In the same year ten days before the Dandi March of Gandhiji, Ambedkar, the wounded healer of the untouchables, launched his temple entry movement at Nasik[1].

Philosophy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

The life of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar was marked by struggles but he proved that every hurdle in life can be surmounted with talent and firm determination. The biggest barrier in his life was the caste system adopted by the Hindu society according to which the family he was born in determined one as untouchable. An untouchable himself, Ambedkar championed the cause of the broken men as he terms the Indian untouchables and fought relentlessly throughout his life to ensure equality, social justice, self respect and freedom for them. The three words of Rousseau ie, Equality, Liberty and Fraternity had revolutionized France in 1789. Dr. Ambedkar was very much influenced by Rousseau's three words and he decided to bring justice based on equality[2].

That is why, perhaps Gandhi described him as "fierce and fearless" and Nehru acclaimed him as a symbol of revolt against all the oppressive features of Hindu society[3]. He became convinced that Hinduism and caste systems were mutually inter-dependent. Abolishing the caste system amounted to demolishing the very foundation of Hinduism which could not be acceptable to any Hindu. Thus the eradication of the caste system necessitated the renunciation of Hinduism itself which was a menace to basic human rights like the right of

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social equality[4]. He wanted to bring a great change in Hindu society. He was a great personality of benevolent movements. His concept freedom was the freedom concept of Dalits to demand to drink water from a public well just as the dalits earlier had fought for simple rights of using public roads, transport and schools[5].

To Ambedkar, social stability depended upon the attitude of men who constituted society. The achievement of social stability meant negation of the caste system in Indian society. So long as there was caste system, the idea of social solidarity and unity was remote. The Mahad Tank Satyagraha, burning of Manu Smriti, Kala Ram Mandir satyhagraha for temple entry were some of the movements launched by Ambedkar[6].

Pathos of the untouchables

Dr. Ambedkar was dead against that society in which not only man hates man but keeps himself away from the shadows of Harijans and downtrodden. Their paths, residences, wells and temples were separate. The down – trodden had not the courage to come before or raising their eyes up or standing beside to talk with people of higher classes. The doors of the temples like the doors of schools were not opened for them. All these above bad traditions indicate the fearfulness of the then society. They are the impact of caste system on our society[7].

Kalaram Temple Entry Movement

The largest and simplest of the temples is Kalaram temple, built in 1790 by Sardar Odikar of Peshwa. The idol of Lord Rama is in black colour and so it is called Kalaram Mandir. The temple structure is built up of black stones. Ramrath Yathra is being held every year. This temple is located at Nasik which is an important religious centre and attracts thousands of pilgrims annually because of the sanctity of the Godavari river and because of the legend that Rama the hero of the Ramayana epic, lived here for a time with his wife Sita and his brother Lakshmanan. Nasik lies at a distance of 180 kilometres from Mumbai and located at a height of 565 metres above mean sea level. As the Kalaram temple was one of the most orthodox Hindu shrines in Maharashtra, the entry of the scheduled castes was forbidden[8]. Dr. Ambedkar launched a temple entry movement in 1930 at Nasik for the sake of the untouchables. It was a landmark in the struggle for human rights and social justice[9].

Preparations for this movement had been going on for over three months. Ambedkar was guiding, inspiring and organizing it from Bombay through his letters. The depressed classes at Nasik had formed a Satyagraha Committee and through its secretary, Bhaurao Gaikwad, informed the trustees of the famous Kalaram Temple that they would launch a satyagraha if the trustees did not throw open the temple to the untouchable Hindus before a particular date. Simultaneously a clarion call was issued to the depressed classes to come to Nasik to assert their right of worshipping shree Rama in the said temple. In response to this call of the satyagraha committee, about 15,000 volunteers and representatives assembled in a specially erected pandal in the depressed classes locality at Nasik. Notable among those present were Deorao Naik, Rajbhoj, Pradan, Shitarkar, Phatit pavandas and B.G. Kher[10].

Commencement of the movement

It was Sunday, March 2, 1930. In the morning at ten, a conference was held under the presidentship of Ambedkar in the pandal to consider the situation and adopt ways and means for launching the Satyagraha. At noon the conference was adjourned and it again met at half past one. At three in the afternoon, the congregation divided itself into batches of four extending itself over a mile-long procession. It was the biggest procession in the history ofNasik. At the head, the depressed class leaders proceeded in military style. Then followed a batch of scouts. Behind them walked about 500 women Satyagrahis showing a revolutionary change in their outlook and they were followed by a multitude of processionists enthused with an exalted spirit, but walking with a full sense of discipline, order and determination. As soon as the procession came to the eastern gate of the temple, the District Magistrate, the Police Superintendent and the city Magistrate moved towards the gate of the temple. As all the gates of the temples were closed, the processionists proceeded to the Godawari Ghat. There the procession transformed itself into a meeting. At eleven o' clock that night, the leaders again discussed the issue in all its aspects and decided to launch a non-violent struggle before the gates of the temple.

Actual Struggle

On March 3, 1930, the first batch of 125 men and 25 women was posted at the four gates of the temple and over 8,000 enlisted satyagrahis were awaiting their turn. But the gates of the temple were closed and barricaded, while the satyagrahis squatted at the entrance, chanting hymns and singing bhajans. Nearly

3000 untouchables gathered in their vicinity but the police was alert and kept them at bay. A strong force of armed police was posted at each gate. Two first class magistrates were on duty at the place since early morning to meet any emergency. Reynalds, the police superintendent, had shifted his office to a tent pitched right in front of the temple. The touchables too were prevented from entering the temple as the gates remained closed, and their leaders were deliberating behind closed doors to find a way out of the impasse[11].

At night a public meeting of the citizens of Nasik was held under the presidenship of Dr. Kurtakoti, the Shankaracharya, but it ended in pandemonium due to the predominance of the orthodox people. The sanatanists by now had become panicky. They pelted stones and shoes at the meeting. It was felt that even Rama himself would be thrown aside, if he was to tell the orthodox Hindus to throw open the temple to the untouchables.

Rath Yatra of Rama

The Satyagraha struggle continued for about a month. On April 9th, the chariot procession of the image of Rama was arranged. A compromise was patched up between the caste Hindus and the untouchables. It was decided that strong men from both sides should draw the chariot. Thousands of people assembled at noon near the main gate of the temple to witness the spectacle. Ambedkar with his men stood near the gate. But before they could touch the chariot, they were engaged in broils by the riotous elements of the caste Hindus. The caste Hindus ran away with the chariot, as secretly planned through a street, narrow, thorny and inconvenient on either side and guarded by the police. A daring Bhandari youth by name Kadrekar broke the cordon of the police and in a moment, crowds of untouchables pursued the chariot amidst showers of stones and captured it. Kadrekar was dangerously wounded and fell down in a pool of blood. Ambedkar was protected by his men. There was free fighting between groups of untouchables and caste Hindus all over the city.

Impact of the Satyagraha

The Satygraha provoked considerable ill-feeling in the minds of the orthodox Hindus throughout the district of Nasik. As a result of this tension, children of the untouchables were thrown out of schools; roads were closed to them; and necessaries of life were denied to them in the markets because they

claimed equal rights with all other Hindus.Untouchables in several villages were ill treated. Despite these sufferings, the struggle at Nasik was carried on. Attempts were being made to persuade both the parties to reach a compromise but so firm was the resolve of the depressed classes that orthodox Hindus had to keep the famous temple closed for a whole year, and the agitation continued right upto the end of October 1935[12]. At last the downtrodden got the facility of entering the temple since October 1935 on account of the continuous struggle and successful leadership of Dr. Ambedkar.

Through this historic Satyagraha, Ambedkar wrested the civil rights of the untouchables. This movement resulted in getting representation for the scheduled castes and tribes in the legislative, executive and the judiciary[13]. Regarding the temple entry movement, Ambedkar remarked. "To accept temple entry and to be content with it is to temporise with evil and barter away the sacredness of human personality that dwells in them". He regarded removal of untouchability more important than erection of temples.

In the same year on 8th August 1930, as the president of the first session of the All-India Depressed Classes Association, Ambedkar expressed great concern at the probability of caste-ridden Hindu oligarchy being granted unrestricted power. He demanded adequate safeguards for the downtrodden untouchables in the constitution and pleaded for direct representation in the councils commensurate with the strength of the depressed community[14].

Ambedkar Vs Gandhi

Temple entry movement was a corollary to the movement for the removal of untouchability and the Poona pact[15]. Ambedkar opposed Gandhian Satyagraha because he thought that Gandhi had never used the weapon of Satyagraha against the Hindus to get them throw open wells and temples to the untouchables. He said that there was not a single fast undertaken by Gandhiji for the removal of untouchabilitity. When Ambedkar was asked to join Gandhiji's camp, he frankly replied that he vitally differed from Gandhi on many points and said, "he would not sacrifice his conscience for his success". He remarked that Gandhi had always discriminated between the constitutional safeguards of untocuchables and other communities". According to Ambedkar, Gandhiji wished to retain caste and untouchability[16]. He said that such a man can not be a friend of the untouchables. When the untouchables were launching satyagraha campaigns, Gandhi surprised the untouchables by issuing a statement condemn

ing their campaign of satyagraha against the Hindus. He stated that "satyagraha was to be used only against foreigners. Ambedkar believed that Gandhi did not want the untouchables to organize and be strong[17].

Conclusion

Ambedkar regarded the waging of a battle against social evils as his religion. His attitude to the Kalaram Temple entry movement was justified. But he thought that the way to lift the untouchables lay in their social elevation and not in temple entry. His social thought was dominated by his urge to lift the untouchable community and break the shakles of casteism and Brahminism. Thus the kalaram temple entry movement proved a great battle for regaining the lost rights of the depressed classes from the caste Hindus.

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Role Of Periyar In Temple Entry Movement And Social Reforms

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Introducfon

First, let us have a look at the historical conditions that facilitated and made possible these two competing modes of talking about castes. This straightaway takes us to the domain of culture as articulated by dominant Indian nationalism, in its battle against colonialism. In an influential formulation, Partha Chatterjee has argued that anti-colonial nationalism marks out the domain of culture or spirituality as 'its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power.' As Chatterjee shows, in the discourse of nationalism, 'The greater one's success in imitating Western skills the material domain, ...the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one's spiritual culture'. In arguing so, Chatterjee departs from Benedict Anderson who treats anti-colonial nationalism as already imagined in the West, and recovers a space of autonomous national imagination for the colonized. Clearly, Chatterjee's argument, in displacing the centrality of the West, relocates the political agency in the colonized. While I agree with the new possibilities opened up by Chatterjee's argument about nationalism in the colonial context, if we pluralize 'national community' and 'national culture', the obvious triumph of dominant nationalism over colonialism would at once emerge as a story of domination over varied sections of the subaltern social groups within the nation. In other words, if we foreground dominant nationalism in an oppositional dialogue with the subaltern social groups within the nation - instead of colonialism-the divide between the spiritual and material, inner and outer, would tell us other stories-stories of domination and exclusion under the sign of culture and spirituality *within* the so-called national community itself.

That is, the very domain of sovereignty that nationalism carves out in the face of colonial domination, is simultaneously a domain of enforcing domi

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nation over the subaltern social groups such as lower castes, women, marginal linguistic regions, by the national elite. For example, Partha Chatterjee, in discussing Tarinicharan Chattopadhayay's '**The History of India**', notes, 'If the nineteenth-century Englishman could claim ancient Greece as his classical heritage, why should not the English-educated Bengali feel proud of the achievement of the so-called Vedic civilization?' If we keep aside the obvious sense of irony in this statement, what we find is a valorized opposition between colonialism and nationalism.

E.V. Ramasamy Periyar

Periyar's entry into public life on a wider scale, transcending his own district of Coimbatore that included Erode till 1979, happened in 1917 when he became one of the Vice- Presidents of Madras Presidency Association that stood for self-government as well as social justice. He became a member of Indian National Congress party in 1919, resigning 29 pubic and official posts, including the Chairmanship of Erode Municipal Council, heeding Mahatma Gandhi's call to boycott everything under the British rule. As a very successful wholesale merchant of farm products, he was earning a lot and was paying income tax. After joining the Congress, he gave up his lucrative profession. Instead of wearing fine costly clothes, which he did so far, he began to wear rough hand-spun and hand-woven clothes. Besides being imprisoned for picketing toddy shops at Erode, he made his wife Nagammai and sister Kannammai to participate in the agitation. Mahatma Gandhi wrote about this incident, appreciating the zeal of E.V.Ramasamy, in 'Young India' dated 22nd December 1921 under the subheading 'Toll from Dravida Desa'. As toddy is obtained from coconut trees, he felled 500 of them, grown in his grove at Thathampatti near Salem. Strictly adhering to the Congress party's decision to boycott courts of law, he discarded Rs. 50,000 worth of promissory notes he had with himself.

In 1922, when the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee met at Tiruppur, he moved a resolution that called for permitting people of all castes to enter into temples and worship the gods. This step was one of the measures meant to abolish untouchability. But the Brahmins, who dominated the Subjects Committee, foiled the attempt to move the resolution on the grounds that it was against the Hindu Scriptures that upheld Varna Jathi System. At this juncture, Periyar E.V.R., for the first time, threatened to burn Ramayana, Mahabaratha, Manu Smiriti and other 'holy' works that justified birth-based social inequality and human indignity. From now on, even as a Congressman, he began to criticize severely in public meetings those portions of scriptures that did not appeal to common sense and reason or acted as hindrances to achieve social equality and fraternity.

When the Swarajists in Congress proposed in 1923, to amend the party rules to enable the members to contest the public elections and enter into the legislatures, Periyar opposed the move. Before making any change in the Party's stand of Non-cooperation, paving the way to enter the portals of power, he wanted the Congress to accept the principles of social justice and the programme of communal representation. As in the case of the greatest benefactors of human race, it was out of abundant love for fellow men and women that Periyar E.V.Ramasamy (1879-1973) dedicated his whole life to remove the causes of their sufferings and sorrows. Though his formal education was limited to primary school, he was endowed with a brilliant intellect and an innate urge to learn from keen observation of the world around, an urge that endured till he breathed his last in his 95th year on 24th December 1973. And that was how be came to possess profound knowledge about human affairs.

Words of Wisdom

Near the Tiruchirappalli City Central Bus Stand, named after Arignar Anna, stands a statue of Periyar. On its pedestal are inscribed his wise sayings: "The basic cause of human misery is the discriminatory practice followed in life. It is the duty of those who love humans to remove discrimination and promote fraternity." "In our country we have gods, religion and castes. They are meant to create hatred and discrimination among people. Only in a land where these are annihilated, human love will flourish."

Communal Representation

Interestingly even before formally joining the Congress in 1919, Periyar gave active support to the Madras Presidency Association (MPA) formed in 1917, and had become its Vice-President. The MPA (known as Chennai Mahana Sangam in Tamil) was specially formed by the non-Brahmins, most of whom were in the Congress, to get communal representation, a measure of securing social justice. So Periyar's involvement in public life began with a demand to help the deprived sections who suffered due to social inequality.

Special Interest

After joining the Congress Party, Periyar took up political issues, and did everything to make non-cooperation movement and Gandhi's constructive programme (1920-23) a success in Tamil Nadu. The part he played in boycotting the foreign cloth, and the courts under British rule, popularising Khadi,

picketing toddy shops, and carrying on vigorous propaganda among the rural and urban population about the evils of alien political domination and economic exploitation, and about the benefits of self-rule made him an outstanding leader of the party. But even amidst other concerns and issues, Periyar showed special interest in eradicating social evils like untouchability, discriminatory treatment, and in transforming social structure and in securing social justice. This interest led him to lay emphasis on issues like temple entry, civil rights, equal treatment of all in public or common places etc. So Periyar (a) repeatedly proposed a resolution every year from 1919 to 1925, demanding the Tamil Nadu Congress to accept the policy of communal representation, (b) played a major role in the Vaikom Struggle (1924-25) that resulted in the opening of the public roads of the then princely State of Travancore to **avarnas** and panchamas, and (c) successfully foiled the practice of discrimination between the Brahmin and Sudra pupils in the Cheranmahadevi Gurugulam, a national school near Tirunelveli, in 1925. All these things Periyar did while he was an active member and popular leader of the Congress Party in Tamil Nadu. Periyar quit that political organisation when it refused to accept his line of approach of creating a sound social system as a pre-requisite for a sound political and economic order.

Against Gods

It was in this context of eradicating social indignity and all other disabilities arising out of it that Periyar for the first time in his public life began to speak against gods and scriptures. It happened in Tiruppur in 1922. The annual meeting of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee was being held. Periyar moved a resolution, which said that the temples that did not permit the entry of low caste people should allow them to enter there after. The resolution was defeated by the effective opposition of the Brahmin members of the Committee, who included C.Rajagopalachari and Madurai Vaidyanatha Iyer. They argued in the traditional orthodox fashion: Caste rules could not be violated. They were sanctioned by the scriptures. And the scriptures should not be altered, as they were the revelations of gods or Supreme God. It was in this context that Periyar openly declared that he would not hesitate burning the Vedas, the Ramayana, the Manu Dharma Sastra and other religious works that upheld the pernicious caste system.

Vaikam Hero

The leaders of Kerala Congress launched the famous Vaikom Satyagraha in 1924, demanding the right for the depressed castes (avarnaas and panchamas) to use the roads around the temples and the public places. But soon it landed in the doldrums when all the leaders were put behind the bars. So they appealed to E.V.Ramasamy, who was then the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress, to go over to Vaikom in the Princely State of Travancore to revive the spirit of the agitators and continue the peaceful struggle. As he was asked to shoulder the responsibility very dear to his heart, he immediately started and soon reached the spot. As it was his wont, he threw himself into the struggle wholeheartedly. He spoke to the individuals and addressed the small and big gatherings, speaking in simple Tamil or broken Malayalam, but always with great zeal and convincing logic. When people witnessed his working with sincere devotion, dedication and determination, they helped him in all possible ways, and large number of them came forward to support the agitation and participate in it. E.V.R was imprisoned for his activities, defying ban orders. First, he underwent simple imprisonment, and subsequently he was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. But the suppressive measures only helped the Satyagraha to gain momentum. When the government came to know that all the right thinking persons and general public was in favour of the cause of the agitators, it decided to bow to their demands. It threw open the roads around the Mahadevar temple to people of all castes. People of Tamil Nadu hailed E.V.R as 'Vaikom Hero', a title coined by Thiru Vi.Kalyanasundaranar.

Sudras And Panchamas

Those who are subjected to discrimination are humiliated; they lose their honor and dignity. When a person loses human dignity, he loses his self-respect. Life without self-respect is wretched and worthless. It is a sub-human life. Periyar wanted everyone to live with dignity and self-respect. This is possible only when all enjoy equality in society. But Indian social order condemns the vast majority of the people as sudras and panchamas. Those who are born as panchamas (or Chandalas) are treated as untouchables. According to Manu Dharma Sastra, Sudras are born to the concubines of Brahmins. In South India, they are only two Varnas - Brahmins and Sudras. This religious tradition sanctified by the Sastras (the scriptures) are recognised by the courts of law. So Sudras are low caste people by birth. Inspite of occupying a higher rung in the social ladder than the panchamas, the Sudras suffer from the indignity of being

dubbed as born to the concubines of Brahmins, a stigma from which the latter do not suffer. That was why Periyar used to say that 'Pariahhood' was better than 'Sudrahood.' He also wanted the Sudras to realise that without removing the 'Pariahhood', the Sudras could not emancipate themselves from their low caste status as belonging to the fourth Varna.

Year of Notable Events

The year 1925, was a significant one in Periyar's life. He started the Tamil Weekly, '**Kudi Arasu**' (Republic) on 2nd May. The objectives of the magazine were declared in the first issue: it will work for the upliftment of every community; it will promote the principles of self-respect, equality and fraternity; as the feeling of high and low acts as pouring oil into the raging fire of caste conflicts, this feeling should be removed, and that true wisdom of considering all as equals should be promoted among the people. Periyar used this magazine as a powerful instrument to shape the outlook of the people on progressive lines by exposing the unjust, cruel and irrational practices, and by inducing them to imbibe the spirit of rationalism and humanism. As an alternative to the schools aided by the British Indian government, a school by name Gurugulam was run at Ceranmahadevi near Tirunelveli in the South Tamil Nadu. It received financial support from Tamil Nadu Congress committee. In 1924, it was known that the Gurukulam served food separately to the Brahmin and non-Brahmin students. They were also made to stay and pray separately. The non-Brahmin members of the Congress party protested against this discriminatory practice and complained to Mahatma Gandhi. As the Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, Periyar stopped payment and the school was closed in the course of time due to lack of funds and the unanimous opposition of the non-Brahmin members of the Congress.

Another significant event that took place in the same year compelled Periyar to take a decisive step in his public life. Being a staunch believer of social justice, he wanted the Congress party to accept the policy of reservation or communal representation. He consistently tried every year to make the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee to adopt a resolution accepting reservation as the official policy of the party. But influential Brahmin members frustrated all his efforts by hook or by crook. But failures would not make EVR to give up his work in a just cause. He made a final attempt at the Provincial Conference held at Kancheepuram in November 1925. But here also they succeeded in preventing his resolution to be put to vote. It was then he decided to quit the Congress party forever to secure justice for the downtrodden.

A Unique Movement

After seven years of sincere public service and great sacrifice from 1919 to 1925, E.V.Ramasamy quit Indian National Congress as he found that the organization was dominated by Brahmins and their henchmen who justified social injustice and inequality based on blind tradition and religious beliefs. He took the historic step of starting the Self-Respect Movement in 1925 and vigorously worked for the eradication of all kinds of birth-based inequalities and discriminations. He campaigned against Varna Jathi (Caste system) and subjugation of women. He was an uncompromising advocate of communal representation or reservation for disadvantaged section of society to promote social justice.

As a means to bring about revolutionary social change, Periyar not only instilled the feeling of self-respect, but also urged to learn new things and to think rationally. Though a non-believer from very early age, he began his energetic public denunciation of gods, scriptures and religions only when they were repeatedly and effectively used as obstacles to his attempts to create an egalitarian society. So long as people cling to blind faith in super-natural phenomena and follow inhuman superstitious practices, they could not experience peace, progress and prosperity.

Periyar was convinced that intellectual awakening of the masses and social equality are the pre-requisites of permanently attaining the socialist state where there will be no hatred and conflict due to economic exploitation, but progress with stability. Those who have imbibed the spirit of self-respect do not consider others, as intrinsically their superiors or inferiors. Cultivation of such an attitude goes a long way to achieve and preserve cultural emancipation, socio-economic equality and political independence.

A Summing Up

For a man born in 1906 and witnessed the most acute battles around caste-whether it be M K Gandhi's threat to suicide which robbed, by means of the Poona Pact, the 'untouchable' communities of separate electorate, or the nation-wide movement for temple entry by the untouchables, or the rise of the non-Brahmin politics in the Madras Presidency during the early decades of the twentieth century-R.K.Narayan's forgetfulness about caste comes through as a bit surprising. But this feeling of surprise fades away when one does a closer reading of his autobiography. All through the autobiography, caste masquerades as something else and makes its muted modern appearance. For instance,

writing about difficulties in getting a proper house to rent in Mysore, he writes, '...our requirements were rather complicated- separate room for three brothers, their families, and a mother; also for Sheba, our huge Great Dane, who had to have a place outside the house to have her meat cooked, without the fumes from the meat pot polluting our strictly vegetarian atmosphere; a place for our old servant too, who was the only one who could go out and get the mutton and cook it.' It does not need much of an effort to understand what 'strictly vegetarian atmosphere' or meat, which is specified as mutton (that is, *it is not beef*) encodes. It is caste by other means. The subtle act of trans coding caste and caste relations into something else-as though to talk about caste, as caste would incarcerate one into a pre-modern realm-is a regular feature one finds in most upper caste autobiographies. Caste always belongs to someone else; it is somewhere else; it is of another time. The act of transcending is an act of acknowledging and disavowing caste at once. In marked contrast to the upper caste autobiographies, thyself-definition of one's identity, as found in the autobiographies of the lower castes, is located explicitly in caste as a relational identity. The autobiographical renditions of Bhama or Viramma, two Dalit women from the Tamil-speaking region, the poignant autobiographical fragments of Dalits from Maharashtra, put together by Arjun Dangle in his edited volume *Corpse in the Well*, and Vasant Moon's *Growing up Untouchable in India* are all suffused with the language of caste - at times mutinous, at times moving. Most often the very act of writing an autobiography for a person belonging to a lower caste is to talk about and engage with the issue of caste. In other words, we have here two competing sets of languages dealing with the issue of caste.

Conclusion

Periyar's dedicated services to the down-trodden, his ceaseless efforts to enlighten the masses and his daring, energetic but peaceful methods of struggle against stifling socio-religious and cultural practices that degraded the original habitant of this land as Sudras and Panchamas under Varna Dharma have produced a historic change in the outlook and behaviors of the common people. His followers decisively discard casteism, and divisions and distinctions based on it. To them, there are no everlasting divine revelations. They consider principles and practices, religious tenets and traditions, social customs and habits as products of given circumstances; we have to change them when changes take place in the interest of promoting human welfare.

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Another Vaikom Struggle: Significance Of Siruvaachi Temple Entry Movement

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I. Introduction

Nowhere in the world perhaps, were there so many efforts and initiatives to worship God, the Ceator, by the created, in the temples, than in India, particularly in Tamil Nadu. And equally quite a number of fights had taken place, ever since the evolution of concept of God, in the name of religion for thousands of years just to enter the temples, in this land known for its deep spirituality. Of course, those are not merely the fights for the right to worship or to have a *dharshan* of the deities and gods alone. There are deeper dimensions involved in those simple acts. They imply the quest for social equality and justice in the society they live. The attempts of various movements continuously to achieve their rights have the elements of the quest for establishing one's legitimate and rightful existence in the society.

These temple entry movements in this land have a long history. From the nineteenth century onwards, it was accelerated especially in Thiruchenthur, Sivakasi, Muthukulathur, Thiruthangal, and Madurai etc., located in the southern part of Tamil Nadu. It continued for centuries. And it spread to other parts of Tamil Nadu and other communities too. In 1924, Periyar EVR spearheaded the movement at Vaikom and sustained the struggle against the oppressive social institutions (casteism and untouchability) till he breathed his last. One such struggle, in the independent India, happened at Siruvaachi in the last decade of the last millennium. Though the crux of the issue and content of the struggle is the same, the forces that were operative in the battleground were different in nature. Once the oppressed groups attain their right, they become oppressors themselves to dominate other groups that they considered inferior to them. That is the ugly face of the caste system. The caste system continues to pervade every walk of Indian life. Dr. Ambedkar rightly observes, "Caste divides the Hindu Society into various groups with varying degrees of prestige, responsibility and circles of social intercourse .The castes within the caste system are distinguished from one another by the existence of special rights for some groups and disabili

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ties for others.... This has also led to a definite social structure with the Bhramins at the top and the Harijans at the bottom"[1] And festivals in villages in one sense are to check and verify whether the service castes (Panchama) are doing their traditional menial works assigned to them or not [2].

2. Siruvaachi – Land and People

Siruvaachi is situated about 10 kilometers away in the north east of Devakottai. It comes under Devakottai block. This village belongs to Kannankudi Panchayat union and Thiruvadanai taluk of Sivaganga district. Each village in the district invariably consists of both Maravas and Harijans (Dalits)[3]. So also in Siruvatchi. (it has equal number of families of Kallars and Dalits). The sociologist Andre Betteille holds the opinion that"The Kalla, Marava and Ahamudiya castes constitute a distinct category. ...and their tradition, a lawless and violent life, which still makes them, feared by the generality of people.... Kalla, Marava and Ahamudiya constitute what is generally called the Mukkulattor (people of three castes) or the Muvendaran (the triple line of Indira). The word "Kalla" is a generic term to include Maravas and Ahamudiyas as well...Their political loyalties are very strong within the "three castes" [4]. Like anywhere in the Indian sub-continent, Dalits were placed at the lowest rung of the caste hierarchy, in this place too, and made to do menial jobs, and were treated no better than slaves

3. NADU: *A peculiar and powerful unit of civil administration*

We have, in our democratic society, divisions like Village Panchayat, Panchayat Union, Taluks, Districts, etc., But in the civil administration, Ramânathapuram and Sivagangai districts still have the practice of *Nadu* system which is powerful in terms of decision making and implementation of the decisions. For example, even today *Iravucherry Nadu, Semponmari Nadu, Kappallur Nadu, Anchu Kottai Nadu, Therpogi Nadu, Unchanai Nadu* etc., are functioning. "When you go to Thiruvadanai and Devakottai areas (setting aside the false impression that is created by the magazines) you can very well notice that the area has not yet become part of the Indian civil administration" [5]. The whole administration is governed by the leaders of the "*Nadu*" consisting of the caste leaders(*Ammbalam*) mainly of Kallars. Others cannot question their authority. Those who dare to raise their voice against their decision would certainly face threat to their lives. Not only the Dalits, even a caste man cannot challenge their hegemony for fear of life [6]. Kallars have the

right to become the *Ambalams* and it is hereditary, not by election. This body of *Ambalams* arbitrarily decide all matters related to the *Nadu*. In the assembly which is called *Nattu kuttam*, apart from pronouncing judgement for the crimes committed by the people in their respective *Nadus*, fixing up the date for the festivals, amount of tax to be collected from the people for the same etc., are their responsibility [7].

Historically speaking, the introduction and the existence of *Nadu* has the following tradition. During the *Pallava* period, the *Nadu* means district administration [8]. Later, "the *Imperial Chola* kingdom was divided into provinces (*mandalas*), there being generally eight or nine of these. Each *mandalam* was divided into *valanadus* or districts. These in turn were sub divided into groups of villages variously called *kunnam, Nadu or kottam* [9]..." says the historian Romila Thappar. And the same opinion is expressed by K.A. Nilakanda Sastri in his book entitled ***A History of South India from Pre Historic Time to the Fall of Vijayanager***[10]. But even after independence, the *Nadu* system continues in Ramanathapuram and Sivagangai districts now.

4. Muthu Nadu

Siruvatchi is in *Sivagangai* district, which was part of the erstwhile undivided *Ramanathapuram* district. The village *Siruvachi* belongs to *Muthu Nadu*, which has 42½ villages under its governance. And *Muthu Nadu* is surrounded by *Eluvankottai Nadu* in the south, *Unjanai Nadu* in the west, *Kappallur Nadu* in east and *Therpoghi Nadu* in the north. All the common names in *Muthu Nadu* would bear '*Muthu*' like *Muthu Nadu, Muthu Nayagi Amman Koil* (Temple), *Muthu Thidal* (ground where festival would take place), *Muthu Eri* (lake) etc. Since the village Siruvaachi comes under the '*Muthu Nadu*', all the decisions concerning the village are taken by the six *ambalams* (leaders) who are assisted by three accountants. Like any other place in those districts, caste discrimination and untouchability practices are strictly followed in *Muthunadu* . The Dalits live in *Cheri*, outside the village and should do all the menial works assigned to them by the dominant castes[11].

1. The Prolonged Struggle: Causes

Traditionally the *Adi Dravidas* (Dalits) were excluded from the temples of the more important deities such as Vishnu and Shiva, served by Brahmin priests [12]. Once the Dalits were educated, they started questioning these practices. Thanks to the secular education introduced by the British, which devel

oped the spirit of enquiry, there has been an upsurge, if not a renaissance among the Dalits, especially among the youth of this community, which had been under caste dominance and hegemony ever since the introduction of the caste system and untouchability in the country. Moreover, wherever Dalits are balanced numerically with the other castes and economically independent from other castes and not working as agricultural coolies, they want to assert their identity and shake away the shackles of slavery imposed on them [13].

Temple festivals in villages have also been the centres of many clashes. At Siruvaachi during the temple festivals, only the Kallars were allowed to carry the sacred milk pot (*pal kudam*), the honey pot (*madhu kudam*) and the flower pot (*poo chatti)* and the Dalits were not allowed to do so. And they are not allowed to become god- possessed men and cannot dance too [14]. The Dalits who have not been allowed to enter the temples or were deprived of participating in the rituals, now started claiming their legitimate right in the festivals and represented all these greivences to the assembly (*nattu kuttam*) but the caste leaders never heeded their pleas and petitions. The Kallars were not willing to concede the legitimate rights of the Dalits.

5. 1. Unchanai - A Stimulus

Unchanai incident could be one such example. At Unjanai, a nearby village, violence erupted following a dispute over the Dalits participating in the Ayyanar temple festival. The Kallars (backward caste Hindus) opposed the Dalits (scheduled caste-Hindus) from taking out a procession of idols of horses for the deity .In fact the tension has been simmering from 1966 but on June 28 , 1979, it erupted into violence which resulted in the killing of five Dalits and injuring 29 persons from the same community. Adding fuel to the fire was the acquittal of the 81 caste-Hindus who were charged with the massacre [15]. This incident left an indelible mark in the hearts of the Dalits in the area and sent shocking vibrations in their minds. Though the Dalits were silenced through barbaric methods of the Kallars, the violence sowed seeds among the Dalits to become organized to fight for their democratic rights [16].

5.2.Land –An Issue

Another important factor is the inefficient and caste ridden government machinery in enforcing land reform legislations. Lands that rightfully belonged to the Dalits have been taken over by subterfuge by the Kallars who had

thus ensured that the Dalits remained agricultural coolies [17]. The civil administration never bothered to enforce the legislation. Moreover many untouchability - eradication programmes initiated by the government have apparently not made the slightest impression or brought the slightest change here [18]. Related to this was the inaccessibility over the common resources by the Dalits. The *Muthu Kanmai* (village pond) is to be used by all the 42½ villages since officially it comes under the Panchayat and revenue authorities. The authorities used to lease the trees in the pond in auction every year. But the Dalits were not allowed to participate in the auction. They were threatened by the caste people. It was an unwritten law. But with the help of the Communist comrades, the Dalits for the first time in the history of that area dared to participate in the auction in 1978 and succeeded to some extent. This small success gave them courage and hope to initiate further action especially to launch the temple entry movement[19].

5.3 A Long March before the Success

Dalits did not have any say in *Shri Muthu Nayagi Amman* temple festival, which is to be celebrated by all the 42½ villages. Though many efforts were taken by the erstwhile Indian People's Front of the Marxist Communist Party (CPI-ML- IPF), Uzhaikkum Vivasaiyigal Sangam (Farmers' Association) and other grass root groups, no progress was made. When there were agitations from the Dalits to participate in the festival, the Collector of Sivaganga (then it was known as Pasumpom district), Gopalan called for a meeting on October 10th, 1986.A tripartite agreement was made among the representatives of the Dalits, leaders of the Kallars and President of Kannankudi Panchayat Union. All agreed, i) to celebrate the festival together (both Dalits and the Kallars), ii) to give another site for the sixteen Dalits for whom government had already sanctioned Patta land but not given and iii) to stop the traditional dehumanizing occupations of the Dalits like drum beating etc. But the agreement was not honoured for many years. The Government authorities also did not bother to execute the agreement. Every year the Dalits eagerly expected to celebrate the festival, but could not do so. Losing patience, the Communist comrades, and the *Uzhaikum Vivasayigal Sangam* (Farmers' Association) started organizing the local people for the purpose of implementing the agreement. As part of the programme to publicize the issue, a march was organized from Madurai to Siruvaachi in the months of May and June 1992 [20].

The police did not give permission, blocked the march and came down heavily on the participants. Inspite of the stringent measures of the police, many took part in the march and were arrested. However the government was forced

to carry out the agreement. After a prolonged discussion with the groups concerned, the then Collector of Sivagangai, Gutsia Gandhi gave an order to the people to celebrate the festival. Accordingly the festival was to be celebrated separately by the Dalits and the Kallars in rotation. (one year dalits will celebrate the festival first and the next year the Kallars). And in 1992 the Dalits were permitted to celebrate the festival. After a long struggle and with the support of the Collector for the first time the Dalits entered the temple, and worshipped the Shri Muthu Periya Nayahi Amman on July 21st. 1992. This was described as another Vaikom struggle by the comrades and activists. Though they were able to succeed in entering the temple, the other provisions of the agreement were never enforced [21].

6. Importance of Siruvaachi Temple Entry

For the first time the Dalits had entered the temple and celebrated the feast. It was certainly a milestone in the history of the Dalits of that area. It was a great success for their continuous struggle and tireless efforts. They had to fight for this legitimate and democratic right for nearly a decade. This simple act gave the Dalits strength in their social life and raised their morale in public life. When other marginalized groups of nearby places heard this success story, they too were stimulated by it (DEMONSTRATION EFFECT). This temple entry movement also united different sections of the Dalits. They also realized that only struggle and struggle alone could bring them success and also help them to achieve their equal status in the society. Of course it was a set back not only to the Kallar community which is a dominant caste but also to the Brahminic ideology which preaches and perpetrates the caste discrimination. The act sounded the death knell to purity - pollution principle which is the foundation of the casteism.

7. Aftermath: Vibrations and Reactions

Though the actual event had taken place successfully, it had its ripples and sent shock waves to the dominant caste people in that area. Violent attacks were let loose on the Dalits by the caste people in the surrounding places. The Collector, who was just executing the rule of law, was immediately transferred. The Deputy Superindentent of Police, belonging to the same dominant caste, was infuriated by the very act and used his power and force to take revenge on the persons who were responsible for the acts of the Dalits. He insulted many Dalits by using abusive and vulgar words many a time. He raided the offices of

the communist party and Scheduled Caste People's Liberation Movement and the residence of its leader M. Subramaniam at Devakottai. The officer also registered false cases against a few leaders of the Indian Peoples' Front comrades who were actively involved in the liberative act [22]. The infuriated Kallars (caste-Hindus) started attacking the Dalits later in that year in many villages of the taluks of Devakottai and Tiruvadanai. Nearly 70 attacks were listed in just one year in those areas. On September 13, 1994, a Dalit leader, Subbu of Madakkottai who was actively involved in the movement and organized the event was murdered [23].

8. Consequences

This temple entry though small, was significant in the following aspects;

1. It was carried out without bloodshed though the situation was tense.
2. It was a success to the Dalit groups and other activists for it raised their morale and increased
   their sustaining strength in such struggle for equality.
3. Of course this event aggravated the caste consciousness of the caste-Hindus, which led to caste clashes that victimized the Dalits.
4. It stimulated not only consolidation of sub castes but also united many Sudra castes against the Dalits and made the untouchabitity practices stricter and more severe in their areas[24].

9. Significance of Siruvaachi Temple Entry Movement

A few interesting and significant factors were involved in the temple entry movement.

1.The sudra (non-brahmins) castes which were fighting for their self respect and their equal rights in the socio- religious spheres, struggled a lot to overcome Brahmin domination and hegemony. The brahminic ideology of inequality based on the concept of the purity and pollution was so deep in the minds of the backward (*sudras*) caste people that they fought for the equal rights to enter into the Brahmin temples but they in turn never allowed the Dalits to enter into their temples. Graded inequality is kept up even today. The irony is that once the oppressed becomes the oppressor in the caste ridden society, the *sudras* want to treat the untouchables (Dalits) as the Brahmins did treat them earlier.

2. From Siruvaachi episode it was very clear that the state, which is supposed be impartial, was functioning, in support of the dominant (Backward) caste. Once again it made it clear that the state does not seem to uphold the principles enshrined in the constitution. Instead it indirectly upheld the principles of *Manu Dharma* to perpetuate the graded inequality in this soil. This could very well be concluded from the fact of the transfer of the Collector and the attitude and action of the police officer after the event. Police who are supposed to be the protective agency of the affected people are having close nexus with the accused and the affluent oppressors. They were in the habit of baiting the victims and often charging them with false cases. "More than duty, the call of their caste and their affinity determine the activities of the police officers"[25].

3.It also raised a fundamental question on the credibility of the Dravidian Parties which once stood for abolition of caste system, self respect, equality, among Dravidians etc., They never opened their mouth on this vital issue, for which their leader, Periyar fought till the end.

4.Silence of the non-Brahmins, who made hue and cry when they were not allowed in the Hindu temples by the Brahmins, causes concern. The convenient silence of these mute spectators on this human right violation reveals certainly their caste affinity and their clannish bond.

5.The second wave of Dalit consciousness was coming up and their search for identity could be seen from the strenuous efforts of the Dalit movements in this temple entry movement. Dalit resurgence is slowly picking up and their search for equality, justice, freedom and their longing for a selfless leader could be seen in the event.

6.There is a marked shift and change in the understanding and methodology of the Marxists (CPI-ML -Indian Peoples' Front). The traditional class approach of the Marxists gave way to the caste approach based on the understanding of the ground realities in the Indian soil. They realized the need for giving due importance to the caste factor in the social transformation after the incident., For in Indian context, the class is manifested only in caste and they felt the need for taking it seriously in their political activities [26].

7.The role of some NGOs' like PALMERA[27]was significant as they did a considerable amount of spadework in that area by way of giving social awareness, conscientizing and mobilizing the Dalit masses there for over two

decades. And the work of the organic intellectuals was appreciable in the awareness programmes conducted by them for the marginalized sections of the society [28].

8.Though Siruvatchi event was insignificant in magnitude and in nature, the impact it created in the minds of both Kallars and Dalits was great. This temple entry movement gave rise to the initiatives for equality and their movement was strengthened. "While the conflict between the Thevars and the Dalits in Muthukulathur in Ramanathapuram district in 1948 subsided in five days, the conflict in the same area took 15 days to be brought to an end in 1957. The Bodi pogroms continued for 23 days while in 1995-96 they continued for nearly nine months" [29]. From this existential situation, one could easily understand the capacity of the Dalits to withstand the attacks of the backward castes and some times to retaliate the offenders. They were no more the Dalits who were submissive as they were a few decades ago. They have become organized very well to protect themselves and to achieve their legitimate rights in the society guaranteed by the constitution. This was evident from their success story in establishing their right in participating in the Temple Car festival at Kandadevi after ten years. Thus the relentless efforts of the uncompromising leader, Periyar did not go waste. Though it did not not yield did desired results immediately in his times, it made ripples in the society. And it took time for the sons and daughters of this soil to continue his mission he had started to establish a just and egalitarian society.

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The Self - Respectors And Temple Entry Movement In Tamil Nadu

I. Udhayasankar *
S. Velladorai* *

Temple entry by the depressed class people of Tamil Nadu was due to the efforts of many social reformers and social-minded leaders. Temples are considered the adobes of abode. But certain sections of the Hindu society like the Nadars and other depressed class people were not permitted to enter the significant temples located in Thanjavur, Kamudi, Kalugumalai, Srivilliputhur, Sivakasi which were consecrated to the Brahmanical deities. Though these people were treated as members of the Hindu society and allowed to follow the same Hindu tenets, and worshipped the same gods, they were not admitted into the prohibited areas near the temples. In the event of accidental pollution, the idols were required to undergo purification and various ceremonies so as to remove the touch of pollution.[1]

The Mysore region was precursor in allowing entry to the depressed class people, as early as twelfth century in the temple of Krishna at Melukote in Mandya District thanks to the efforts of Saint Ramanuja. In Tamil Nadu the Nadars were the first people to fight for the cause of temple entry[2]. In order to attain the temple entry, they agitated in the temples at Thanjavur, Madurai, Erode, Arupukkottai, Kamudi, Kalugumalai, Srivilliputtur, Sivakasi, Tirunelveli, and Tiruchendur.[3] It led to communal riots between the Nadars and caste-Hindus. Hence, the Nadars decided to build new massive temples in the brahmanical style and waited for an awakening from the other sections of the depressed people and a lead from the social-minded leaders [4]

In the first half of the twentieth century, the social reformers felt that temple entry movement was of primary importance in the agitation against the eradication of untouchability. Tamil speaking arena of the erstwhile Madras Presidency was the last segment to enter into this struggle, the demand for temple entry was first started in Kerala by the Ezhavas in 1919. But from 1920's

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with the rise of E.V.R. as a messiah of the non-Brahmins and depressed class people in Tamil Nadu, a demand for their entry into temples began to gain momentum. EVR's Self-Respect Movement believed that the depressed class people were not only entitled to enter the temples but also they could go upto the sanctum sanctorum of the temples in the capacity of Hindus and as human beings. The Self-Respecters induced by a Brahmanophobia attitude, with a desire to acquire equal rights for the depressed people, made some provocative attempts that earned the opposition of the orthodox and other Brahmin priests of the temples.[5]

Madurai Temple Entry, 1927

E.V.R. deduced that the root of all the social evils emanated from Hinduism including the penetration of caste discrimination in Tamil Nadu. Therefore, his followers, known as the Self-Respectors opposed the concept of pollution-purity practised in Hindu temples. At different parts of Tamil Nadu they attempted to enter into the temple along with some downtrodden people. They justified their action asserting that the temple entry was their right to them and those who attempted to prohibit them would be treated as the enemies of social order based on casteless and classless society. The Self-Respectors in their attempt partially succeeded in some places and received a few setbacks in some other places.[6] In this endeavour in January 1927 some non-Brahmins made an attempt to enter the Madurai Meenakshinamman shrine, but were prevented. The ***bhattars*** of the temple closed the main door of arthamantapam (inner shrine). Therefore, the infuriated Self-Respectors came back and contented themselves with breaking coconuts and lighting camphor. On February 4, 1927 the Self-Respectors under the leadership of J.N. Ramanathan, a disciple of E.V.R. held a meeting and condemned the ***bhattar's*** obstruction to the temple entry process. On February 7, 1927 inspired by J.N. Ramanathan, the Self-Respectors made another attempt to enter the temple. In that occasion, there erupted a considerable commotion among the Self-Respectors. The ***bhattars*** again hurt the sentiments of the non-Bramhins by seeking the help of police who acted promptly and tactfully.[7] In spite of this, J.N. Ramanathan, along with other non-Brahmins relentlessly battled to impress upon the people, the necessity of temple entry as a social right.[8]

Attempt at Tiruvannamalai, 1927

In the same year J.S. Kannappar, a Self-Respect leader with some other supporters tried to enter into the Siva temple at Tiruvannamalai. They were

prevented from entering the temple on the pretext that they belonged to the atheist ideology.[9] The temple authorities filed a suit in the court against J.S. Kannapar, their leader on February 8, 1927. The Sub-Magistrate gave his verdict on April 1928 in favour of J.S. Kannappar, and fined the temple authorities on the grounds that J.S. Kannapar and his followers were all Hindus and had every right to enter any Hindus temple when they did not disturb either the proceedings or the purity of the temples. The Self-Respectors considered the verdict as a victory which in turn became a great blessing to the social reformers for their avowed cause.[10]

Trichirappalli and Triplicane Temple Entry, 1928

Very soon, J.S. Kannappar, J.N. Ramanathan and S. Dhandapani Pillai along with some other Self-Respectors attempted to enter the Rockfort temple at Tiruchi. But their attempt ended in a failure due to the closure of the door by the temple authorities.[11] Reacting to the attempts of the Self-Respectors, the temple authorities filed a case and thereby the Magistrate of Trichi issued prohibitory order, which permanently forbade J.N. Ramanathan. S. Dhandapani Pillai tried to enter Sri Parthasarathi Temple at Triplicane, Madras, on July 6, 1928. While marching towards the second goupra gate of the temple, he was blocked on the way and the door closed, but he tried in another way to enter the temple. This attempt also ended in vain. He filed a suit against this action with the assistance of a lawyer, H.Vasudev, in which he stated about the humilation meted out to him by the Brahmin priests and temple authorities. The High Court of Madras held the view that any person calling himself a Hindu had the right to enter the temple. Yet, the verdict did not change the attitude of the orthodox members.[12] In the special session held at South Indian Reformers Conference on November28, 1928 E.V.R., as the President of the Conference gave a clarion call to the Self-Respectors to fight tirelessly for the establishement of equality in temples. He also stressed the Justices like P.Subbarayan, A.P. Patro, Panagal Rajah and R.K.Shanmugam Chetti to give political form to the Self-Respectors in order to ventilate their ideas on the temple entry issue. The session further passed a resolution to clear the barriers for those who were still prohibited from entering the temples.[13]

Erode Temple Entry, 1929

E.V.R., acting as the chairman of the Devastanam Committee, Erode, unanimously passed a resolution in favour of temple entry of all the classes.[14] It

authorized all the sections of the Hindus to go as far as the sanctum sanctorum and worship the deities of the temple which were under the management of the Erode Devasthanam Committee.[15] However, before the promulgation of the resolution, on the inspiration given by Ponnambalam and Gurusamy, Eswaran and two depressed class members Pasupathi and Karuppan along with ten others forcibly entered the Fort Eswara Temple in the Erode town on April 4, 1929 without the knowledge of E.V.R. who was for a while away from Erode.[16]

Muthusami Gurukkal, the temple priest by closing the doors did not allow the Self-Respectors and informed the matter to Muthu Naicker, the trustee of the temple. It aggravated the situation further. Muthu Naicker on his return from Uttukuli complained to the police accusing that the Self-Respect leaders violently a entered the Dwarapalagar Mandapam and threatened the **bhattar** to let them into the sanctum sanctorum for performing poojas and other related usual religious ceremonies. On April 18, 1929 they were charged under section 154 of Criminal Procedure Code. The three accused members were immediately arrested and were let on bail with the condition that they should appear before the Stationary Magistrate's Court for enquiry in proper time. When the accused appeared before the court of enquiry, they doubted justice from the Magistrate who happened to be a Brahmin. They made an application to the Magistrate to transfer the case to another court. However, the Magistrate did not heed, but ordered the accused to come back to the court on April 22, 1929. Meanwhile, the Self-Respectors, supporting the three accused members convened a meeting at Erode. They had two options whether to fill the jail by doing Satyagraha or by involving in the debates to keep their stand as right. Yet, in the absence of E.V.R., they could not come to a decision. Because of their involvement in the social cause, the Self-Respectors at the same time supported the Justice Party on the political side. They were very firm in their stand to get temple entry right at any cost for the sake of the bottom line people of the society.[17]

On April 22, 1929 the temple entry case was taken up for enquiry by the Stationary Magistrate of Erode and for the cause of the accused K.C. Subramaniyam, the barrister of Nagapattnam was involved in the debate. In the court, Muthusamy Gurukkal gave witness that the entry made by the Panchama's into the temples was a pollution and it could be rectified only by doing the purification ceremony and thereafter by performing usual poojas. After the enquiry, the case was adjourned to May 1, 1929 and order was issued to reappear on the date.[18] After seven months, the sub-Magistrate gave his judgment on January 22, 1930 which declared the three accused as guilty. Everyone of

them was asked to pay a fine of Rs.60/-.[19] Then on the intervention of Deputy Collector, the fine was reduced from Rs 60/- to Rs. 30/- each.[20] They had to bear two months rigorous imprisonment if they could not pay the fine. He also wished that the accused volunteers should be punished through imprisonment and in this way he invited mass attention for the cause of temple entry. On the other hand, when the two accused came out from jail by paying fine he was discouraged, and immediately through Swami Shajanandam, an Adi- dravida leader, he also brought out Eswaran by paying the fine. Yet, he did not give up his fight for temple entry. [21]

View of Tamil Nadu

Following the Erode Temple Entry Agitation, the Self- Respectors made another attempt at Venkatesa Perumal temple in varagoor where the low caste-people were not allowed entry. They filed a case, but the court verdict also turned against the volunteers. In this case, T. Varadarajalu Naidu condemned the verdict of Justice Wallace through his paper **Tamil Nadu** thus: "Had Justice Wallace thought over the fact that all are equal in the presence of god, it is certain that his conscience would not have permitted him to pronoûnce such a jugement."[22]

Boycott of Temple

After these futile attempts to secure rights for temple entry, the Self-Respectors decided to boycott the temples in a united stand for making change in the hearts of the Brahmins on the one side and if it was not possible, to persuade the people to neglect temples.[23] The Self-Respector considered that religious institutions, and many Hindu religious rites conducted by Brahmins were permanent sources of workless incom for them.[24] Self-Respectors called the non-Brahmins to refrain from spending any money on worship in temples and to reject the services of priests and to cease building new temples. They also advocated that the income of the existing temples and pious endowments should be utilized for promoting technological studies, industrial research and education in public health and general hygiene.[25] Even after its ideological shifts to rationalism and atheism, a Self-Respectors asserted it was the community's birth right to make use of such public places where entry was denied to them. K.M.Balasubramaniyam, the Self-Respector asserted that the free entry into temple was a social right and if that right was secured, that would be equal to removing one of the roots of the caste system. [26]

Conclusion

The followers of E.V.R., known as "Self-Respectors" from the beginning itself advocated the entry of depressed class people into temples based upon the ideology of E.V.R. The Self-Respectors from different parts of Tamil Nadu took an active part in asserting their rights to enter into the temples where the low caste non-Brahmins were prohibited. In this connection, EVR's ideology was well backed by J.N. Ramanathan and J.S. Kannappar. In their attempt to enter the temples at different places, the Self-Respectors had to face severe opposition from the orthodox reaction and also met many difficulties like court cases. Even though their attempts were futile, due to the lack of legislative measures, E.V.R. and his followers were the pioneers in the modern era in advocating temple entry to the depressed class people. But, due to the reactionary forces of the Brahmins, the Self-Respectors took an ideological shift to atheism but advocated temple entry as the community's birth right and wanted a change of heart from the Brahmins to open the temple to all irrespective of any caste. The Self-Respectors the temple entry bill of supported Subbarayan as a wise move and acclaimed it. Following the initiation given by E.V.R., the struggle for temple entry was continued by Ambedkar at Nasik in 1930, at Guruvayur by Kelappan in 1931 and at Madurai by A. Vaidyanatha Ayyar. E.V.R welcomed Rajaji's Temple Entry Indemnity Act of 1939 as a right move at the right time.

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Vaikkam Satyagraha And Its Impact On Social Reform Movement In Madras Presidency

Mallika Begum*

The temple entry movements are among the social reform movements. Temples have always played an important role in the Hindu way of life. For a long period, several groups of Hindus were prohibited from entering temples. The origin of the prohibition of certain groups entering temple is associated with pollution and purity concept. Even in the early part of the 20th century in Madras Presidency, many lower caste people were not permitted entry into the temples.

The right of entry into temples was taken seriously when it was associated with a symbol of prestige and social status. The privilege to enter temples was linked to social status and denying entry was meant a social disability. The claims of the untouchables and other lower caste groups for entering temples and certain prohibited streets in the villages resulted in the temple entry campaigns. Earlier the Nadars of the southern districts in the Madras Presidency started temple entry movement. In 1874, the Nadars demanded the right to enter the Meenakshi Temple at Madurai. During the 19th century, the Indian National Congress, initiated social conferences. Thereafter, temple entry agitations gained momentum in Madras Presidency.

Mahatma Gandhi, K. Kelappan, George Joseph, T.K. Madhavan, E.V. Ramaswamy headed the Vaikkam Satyagraha in 1924 by forcing entry into the prohibited streets within the jurisdiction of the Travancore Kingdom. In 1920s, in Travancore State, movements were launched for opening the approach roads to temples to the so-called, untouchables. It was eventually programmed for throwing open the temple to all the Hindus, irrespective of caste. The Vaikkam Satyagraha was conducted in a very small village called Vaikkam in the erstwhile Travancore State. The Satyagraha was organised by the so-called outcastes. They wanted to defy the ban, which prohibited them from using the roads leading to the temple[1]. Till 1924, the "low caste" men were not allowed to walk in the streets, near the temple, as that would "pollute" the area[2].

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The immediate cause for the Satyagraha was an incident that took place between some Brahmins and Madhavan, a lawyer, who belonged to a lower social status, namely the Ezhava community. He went there to attend the court, which was located in the campus of the temple. It was the Maharaja's birthday and the religious ceremony was being conducted in another part of the temple campus. The orthodox sections denied Madhavan entry into the court and closed the gates of the court because he was a low caste. This incident was made into an issue by the local leaders of the Ezhava community with the support of T.K. Madhavan, a fellow Ezhava and the editor of *Deshabhini*. George Joseph, a prominent Kerala Congress leader and K.P. Kesava Menon, the editor of *Mathrubhumi* had decided to organise a Satyagraha at Vaikkam, which was seat of caste autocracy. In this citadel of orthodoxy, the untouchables and unapproachable were kept aloof and allotted places of prescribed distance. They were now determined not to rest until they gained their legitimate right to walk on the prohibited roads by taking out a procession of the Ezhavas, Tiyyas, Pulayar, Shanars and Parayar. They duly conveyed to Gandhiji their decision to conduct the Satyagraha "in the most orderly way possible"[3].

Having attained Gandhiji's approval, the leaders launched the Satyagraha on 31 March. George Joseph was in charge of the campaign. But even before the campaign was properly set on its track, the leader found himself behind the bars along with eighteen other men of the Kerala Congress[4]. By the second week of the April 1924, when most of the leaders had been picked up by the Travancore authorities, appeal was made to all India leaders to lead the movement. Rajaji sought the advice of Gandhiji. Gandhiji replied to Rajaji asking him to proceed to Vaikkam, and regulate the movement and to negotiate with the Diwan of Travancore[5]. Rajaji did not take the lead due to his poor health. Appeals were made to other Congress leaders of the Madras Presidency. E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, (E.V.R.) the then President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, was requested to take over the leadership of Satyagraha.

E.V.R. took the mantle of leadership. He criticised the evil practice of untouchability and he said that the God did not deserve to be in the temple at Vaikkam, if it felt that by the touch of the untouchables, it would get polluted. Such an idol should be removed and used for washing clothes[6]. Such utterances of E.V.R. attracted thousands of people who flocked to listen to him. The Maharaja of Tranvancore was shocked at E.V.R.'s political speeches particularly directed against the Brahmins and feared that they would lead to communal disharmony. Within a week of his arrival at Vaikkam, E.V.R. was arrested and

sent to one month imprisonment at the Arivikuttu jail. On his release, he was served a warrant to leave the state immediately. He defied the warrant, as he did not wish to leave the Travancore State without completing his noble mission. His speeches became more provocative and earned him a second time rigorous imprisonment for six months. But he was released two months earlier under amnesty due to the sudden death of the Maharaja[7]. Finally, the cause of satyagrahis at Vaikkom was realised. E.V.R.'s sincere involvement in the Vaikkam Satyagraha earned him the title "Vaikkam Veerar" (Hero of Vaikkam). The struggle was continued up to October 1927 and ultimately the roads were thrown open by the Travancore ruler to the untouchables[8].

The first struggle to wipe out untouchability that succeeded in the whole of India was this Vaikkam Satyagraha. An aftereffect of this Satyagraha was the important struggle relating to campaign for the eradication of untouchability in Guruvayoor. Kelappan played an important role. With the blessings of Gandhiji, the Kerala Provincial Committee decided at its meeting on 3rd August 1931 to begin a Satyagraha in the famous Lord Krishna temple at Guruvayoor in Ponnani taluk of Malabar, controlled by the Zamorin of Calicut. This temple was exclusively reserved to the savarnas[9]. Kelappan moved a resolution for the beginning of the agitation in the annual session of the All India Congress Committee held at Bombay in 1931. Before the beginning of the agitation, K.Kelappan along with his friends like, M.Sankaran Nambiyar, A.K.Gopalan, Madhavan, Subramania Thirumumbu and Hariswaran organised public meetings at different places like Trithals, Kottapadi, Andithode, Edappal, Kumaranailur, Pattambi and Pailipuram. They sought popular support to organise a mass upheaval against the long established customs. On 1 November 1931, they started Satyagraha in front of the temple[10].

The temple authorities tried to prevent the agitation with the help of police by erecting barbed wires around the temple[11]. Appeals were made from all parts of the country to the Zamorin, the trustee of the temple, to throw it open to all the Hindus. Yet, he did not respond to their popular demand. Volunteers from all over India thronged to Guruvayoor to participate in this Satyagraha. After a long struggle, the temple entry Satyagraha movement at Guruvayoor gained momentum on 13th September 1932[12]. This Guruvayoor temple entry issue paved the way for the passage of the Temple Entry Proclamation Act of 1936. The Proclamation was an epoch making event in the history of social reform movement in India[13].

The Tamil Nadu Provincial Temple Entry Conference was held at Madurai on 13th January 1935. It was a campaign against untouchability and the movement for the opening of temples to Harijans. The opening of the Meenakshi temple at Madurai was a great event in that it was popular with all concerned[14]. Later on, an ordinance was passed. The Madras Legislature passed the Madras Temple Entry Authorization and Indemnity Bill, 1939, on 8th August 1939. It obtained the assent of Governor - General on 4th September 1939 and became an act[15].

The temple entry authorisation and indemnity act of 1939 authorized the trustees in charge of any temple to throw it open for worship to the exterior classes, if, in their opinion the worshippers were not opposed to such an innovation. It was a significant one because it required some measure of courage and determination. Along with this, Depressed Classes Religious Disabilities Bill was also passed. Thereafter, temples at Madurai, Chidambaram, Trichy, Kanchipuram, Palani and other 103 big and small temples in Tamil Nadu were opened to all Harijans[16].

Further, big temples like Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarrar temple, Madurai, Sri Kudalalagar temple of Madurai, Sri Sundararaja Perumal temple, Valayapatti, Melur taluk, Madura district, Sri Kalamega Perumal temple of Tirumohur, Madurai taluk, Madura district, Sri Brahadeswarar temple, Tanjore and Sri Kasi Visvanathaswami temple, Tenkasi, Tinnevelly district were thrown open to all[17].

The first step for the depressed classes to come forward was Vaikkom Satyagraha and this paved the way for the social reformers to bring their social reform movements to conclusion. One of the social reform movements in Madras Presidency after the success of Vaikkam Satyagraha was Periyar's Self Respect Movement in December 1926[18]. The basic ideal of the Self-Respect Movement was the removal of superstitious beliefs and irrational rituals. E.V.R. specifically pointed out that the movement had not adopted 'atheism' as an ideology nor was it formed as an 'anti-god' or 'anti-religious' movement.

On the basis of the above view, the social ascendancy of the Brahmins was ridiculed. Abolition of untouchability and caste system was also included in this movement. Liberation of women was another motive of this movement. Child marriage and forced widowhood were condemned. They welcomed the Saradha Act. It fixed 16 as the marriage-age for girls.[19]

They established marriage bureau and self-respect institute for women. Intercaste marriage and remarriages of widows were encouraged. Brahmin Purohitas were avoided at the time of marriages. E.V.R. viewed thus: "Therefore the whole edifice of Hinduism must be pulled down and then only can the foundations of caste and enslavement of women be destroyed."[20]

Thus the historic Vaikkam Satyagraha, which was begun on March 30, 1924 dragged on for almost twenty months, attracted the attention of people all over the country. Gandhiji himself blessed the struggle and extended his full moral support to the Satyagrahis. The role of the Indian National Congress in spearheading the temple entry movement in the Madras Presidency was significant. The progress of the Vaikkam Satyagraha in Travancore paved the way to other temple entry movement at Guruvayoor and other places, and also laid a strong belief in the minds of the social reformers to bring out the social reform movement to success in the Madras Presidency. It can be said that Vaikkam was in travail to yield the baby of temple entry.

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Role Of Thanthai Periyar In Temple Entry Movement

Dr. Palani. Arangasamy*

Shakespeare, the Elizabethan playwright is neither right nor optimistic especially when he says,

'The good is often interred with the bones
Evils that men do lives after them'

What good Thanthai Periyar did, in about six decades of his politico-religious and social life are not only remembered but are being disseminated and perpetuated by the Dravida Kazhamites under the dynamic leadership of Dr. K. Veeramani. What Periyar spoke was out of his innate genius and sheer common sense. What he decided, he stuck to. Boldness and self confidence were among his inherent qualities.

Erode Venkatappa Ramasamy, popularly known as Thanthai Periyar was an atheist and iconoclast besides being a man of heterodoxy. He was like a Samurai who never believed in defeat or in failure. Never bothered to swim against the cross-currents of socio-religious obstacles and against anything that was irrational to his conscience and scrutiny. Anything illogical, unreasonable and impractical, he fought against them. He had never been a votary of god in his life. But it is a quirk of irony that his early life was in an atmosphere of devotion, charity and spirituality. But these qualities did not touch him at all. They created in him an aversion to godliness and made him revile it in a fit of sarcasm and fun. His was a rapier thrust against rituals and ceremonies. He was outrightly a humanist and a rationalist.

Even though born of orthodox parentage, he rose against gods, condemned the festivals and superstitions. Never believed anything just because it is a common hearsay or tradition. Those ideas that are convincing to his conscience, and acceptable after a scrutiny, he believed and spoke. God is merely a guess and a figment of imagination, he said.

Such being the case, the title of this article may appear paradoxical as if Periyar was championing the cause of temple entry in the full sense of the

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term. It would be anathema, if not ridiculous to say so. What is intended here is the role he played and views he held both in writing and speaking on the occasions of the temple entry movement that gained momentum in the middle decades of the 20th century and in the wake of Indian independence.

A retrospective look, therefore on the trend and mode of worship that was prevailing in Tamil Nadu needs a mention in this context. Even though the Sanskritic influence has been there in Tamil since the Cankam Age, the real influence of Brahmins and their Sanskrit got entrenched and made inroads into the society and religion in Tamil Nadu roughly from circa the 7th cent. A. D. It had already become the language of prayer in temples.

The Sanskrit, deemed as a Devabasha, was very much patronized by the Pallavas and in Pakoor village near Pondicherry, there was a Sanskrit college. Contemporary Saiva Saints and their Tamil hymns had to struggle for survival against the onslaught of Sanskrit. The religious antipathy of Jains and Buddhists was against the Tamil Saivaites. The Sanskrit, otherwise known as a holy language, had a monopolistic sway in rituals, ceremonies and in daily prayers in the sanctum sanctorum of temples. The Tamil, in its own soil, found itself relegated to background by the Sanskrit and its influence.

There had been temples for the poor and temples for the rich, a rural shrine for untouchables and another one for caste Hindus. Gods were different for religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and innumerable of their sects and subsects. The classification of *varunas* along with communities and castes got itself percolated to their respective gods and goddesses as well. No wonder there are vegetarian godes and non-vegetarian gods! Added to these is sectarian gods for Vaishnavas, Saivas, Veera saivas, etc. Thus the scenario of worship, be in temple or in public place, was pell-mell in Tamil Nadu. But still the upper hand was with Sanskrit pundits who presided over the domestic ceremonies, temple rituals, social functions and palace affairs. From birth to death with innumerable ceremonies in between, nothing escaped from the ritualistic rigmarole of Brahmins.

The Brahministic hold and their grip over all other communities was thus paramount and complete. The Brahmins saw to it that they alone learnt Sanskrit. The caste-system which they perpetuated in society was conducive to their hold on it. The caste system was reflected in prayer and temple-worship.

There were a number of shrines and temples as much as there are tribes and castes in India. A note on temple-worship in Tamil Nadu is rather relevant in this context.

Worshipping a god or a spirit must have been there since time immemorial but worshipping it in a temple as we see it to-day is of later origin. Praying the Sun-god or other natural phenomena like thunder, fire, lightning and rain along with rivers, hillocks and mounts has been there in the pre-Cankam era. In those days, people must have led a typical eco-friendly life. As time grew, the tradition of worshipping deities in wooden structure began. But wood does not last long. This is the reason why an effective study of temples of the post-Cankam and pre-mediaeval temple history could not be made.

Such wooden-temples gradually got replaced by brick structures and it is but natural that there ought to have been a period in which both wooden and brick structures existed side by side. From 7th century onwards, especially during the reign of Pallavas, Chalukyas and Hoysalas, rock-cut temples began to get prominence. In the origin and development of temple arts, consecrating an image in a hill or a cave began in the period of Pallavas. As hills and caves are few and far between, the reign of successive Chola rule that centred on Thanjavur as capital, roughly from the 8th century onwards, built huge temples mostly for Lord Siva.

Retrospectively looking at the origin and development of Temples, one could faintly recollect now that there had been times for all commoners including hill tribes to pray god in open spaces with their humble offerings such as rice, cereals, grains, flowers, etc. References abound of animal sacrifices too in the Cankam era. This tradition of praying god in open spaces or under the trees or subsequently in caves ought to have been the customary practice in Tamil Nadu to begin with.

When prayer was thus a common and routine practice among the inhabitants of all the traditional five fold geo-physical divisions, there was no question of prayer becoming prestigious and prerogative of a few. No question of permitting a few and barring others from the temple. Problem of allowing some to worship at *sanctum sanctorum* and to some others from a distance and to many others, an absolute denial to enter into the very precincts of the temple itself is man-made blunder.

These temples still brave wind and weather is a matter of astonishment but they perpetuated the Sanskrit hegemony in prayer and through it that of the Brahmins, is a bitter fact. The commoners seem to have been docile and rule-bound in those monarchical days. The Brahmins took it as a great advantage and made the public submissive and even slavish. The royal patronage that the Brahmin purohits enjoyed ensured their hegemony over the other communities.

The Brahminical influence was thus continued and found to be so strong in the mediaeval age. Of the four Saivaite Saints, Thirugnana Sambandar and Manickavasagar were Brahmins. King RajaRaja, his son Rajendra and his paternal aunt Kunthavai Nachiyar were hell-bent on constructing huge temples for Siva and arranged for temple-worship by Brahmins in Sanskrit as per the Agamic traditions. Innumerable inscriptions of King RajaRaja and his son Rajendra confirm that there had been arrangement for conducting the prayers and rituals in Sanskrit. The chola kings endowed a number of hamlets known as *caturvedimangalams* for Vedic Scholars and set apart fertile lands for their livelihood and maintenance. A feeling among the commoners had been created that Sanskrit is a divine-language and prayer in it must be pleasing to the Divine-beings. King Rajendra, as per an inscription, brought hundreds of Brahmins from the Gangetic plains and settled them in villages around the present Gangai-konda-cholapuram.

This socio-religious hegemony of Brahmins continues ever since the reign of later chola dynasty. With royal patronage, the priestly Brahmins saw to it that the prayer was no longer a free-for-all exercise but as much identifiable and segregated as there are castes and communities perpetuated by them in society. Temple-entry became thus the prerogative of a few privileged communities who settled themselves on top of the four-fold or five-fold varunas.

This socio-religious segregation went on unimpeded in the succeeding centuries until the emergence of social and religious reform movement spear-headed by Saint Ramalingar in the 19th century. But generalizing remarks on religious tolerance and communal amity were hinted at, even earlier by Saint Thirumoolar in the 10th century and Saint Thaymanavar and Pattinathar in the early decades of the 19th century. Except mouthing didactic eclecticism and lip-deep sentiments on religious tolerance, these Saints did not even touch the fringes of a deep-rooted Brahminical hegemony and religious and communal segregation perpetuated by them on contemporary society.

Saint Ramalingar condemned the religious fanaticism in unequivocal terms. He declared a clarion call to wage war against the myths, religions and murky traditions. He counselled the world not to get embroiled, entangled and get annihilated in the murky mythicisms and muddle-headed casteisms. This bold assertion against religious chauvinism was a thematic revolution but did not seem to have cut across the contemporary society and did not bring forth a desired effect. Even for that boldness, Saint Ramalingar was frowned upon by the powers that are and his demise, as a result is even now shrouded in mystery. The lofty ideals of one who questioned the justifiability of religions besides softly preaching for a universal outlook, devoid of any narrow religiosity and sectarianism, did not reach the cross- section of society. Saint Ramalingar was too soft to take the bull by the horns but Thanthai Periyar did, fought and made the religious fanatics take to their heels.

The ups and downs of religiosity and upper and lower rungs of communal ladder continue to reflect in worship. The different sects of various religions wreaked a havoc on the pattern and method of worship along with concomitant rituals and ceremonies. Inter-religious clashes, discord among different communities and rivalries continued. The pell-mell, fluidity thus created by religions, castes and communities continued as usual.

In the wake of Indian independence and just a few decades before, it was felt that political liberty alone is not of sole importance. Freedom will have relevance and meaning only if it is conjoined with economic and social liberty. To bring about this social liberty, there must be a free-entry for all communities into the temples. Rajaji, Kalki-Krishnamoorty, Madurai-Vaidyanathalyer, Sivashanmugam Pillai and K. A. P. Viswanathan went about preaching the importance of temple entry movement. Even Dravida Kazhamites such as Kuthooci-Gurusamy and Mr. Vedachalam spoke and wrote about the importance of the right of those who were desirous of worship in a temple, even though they have their own reservations about god.

Madurai Meenakshi temple was out of bounds to the scheduled castes and tribes for a long time. Madurai-Vaidyanatha Iyer took the lead to take the lower caste people into the temple. The move created a great hubbub among the public. Caste Hindus backed by Brahmins opposed it tooth and nail. Rajaji sought the help of the then local congress leader Muthuramalinga Thevar to lead the temple-entry function at Madurai and it went on well. Similar functions took place in Erode, Conjeevaram and other pilgrim centres of Tamil

Nadu. This temple entry movement signaled the beginning of the whole lot of commoners getting into the temples for prayer.

It was a remarkable social reform for certain socio-political leaders of the then congress party. But Periyar did not consider it as such. Periyar's outlook on god and religion was altogether different. He questioned the very existence of god and reiterated its irrelevance and uselessness. Left to him, he would have enforced a blanket ban on gods and temples. But surprisingly, he too was in favour of Temple Entry Movement. Even though he did not take part actively in the movement, he did not object to his cohorts, colleagues and workers to join with the movement. Cursorily looking at, this may appear to be paradoxical. How could it be justifiable that an active atheist and an iconoclast such as Periyar supported it if not championed the course of Temple entry?

Periyar's support of the H.R and C.E Act of the 1925 is also for the same reason. Not that he loved Hindu religion but he pleaded for the right of the people in questioning the Brahmin-oriented looting of the property and income of the temple. Out of 4 Crores who claim to be Hindus, about 13 lakhs of Brahmins enjoy the temple income. Why should it be, he asked. We can even say, but for Periyar, the H.R & C.E Act would have been shelved!

In 1926, just a year or so after his exit from Congress, Periyar organized a District-level Self-Respect Conference at Thirunelveli. One of the major resolutions carried out was that all Hindus must be given entry into the temples. A retired Tahsildar, Mr. Nellaippa Pillai opposed the resolution and requested an amendment that barring Adi-Dravidas, others might be given entry into the temples. That was said to be the opinion of Mrs. Annie Besant, the leader in Brahma Gnana Sangam. Periyar outrightly condemned this stand of Mr. Pillai and denigrated the Sangam as an offshoot of Brahmin Association.

Periyar arranged for the Erode Temple Committee in 1929 to permit all Hindus into their temple. This was violently opposed by caste Hindus, Brahmins and even white officials. Periyar warned them that, no power on earth could prevent the Adi-Dravidas from their conversion into Islam. In a meeting at Erode on 20, December 1929 he congratulated the boldness of 69 Adi-Dravidas who converted into Islam even in those days at Seelayampatti in Madurai District. It may be recalled that mass conversions of the Ezhavas to Christianity was the logical outcome of the rigours of caste tyranny in Kerala.

In Kamuthi, Aruppukkottai, Virudhunagar and Madurai, the Nadars were not allowed into the temple. This was criticized by Periyar in a number of meetings he addressed in those areas and in a number of his editorials in *Kudiarasu*, then a weekly from Erode.

One must be very careful in analyzing the policy of Periyar in this context. He wanted people to enter into the temple. This he said only for asserting their human rights. He made a maximum use of his socio-political platforms to castigate gods and to condemn the religions and myths. But he asserted the right of entering into the temple as hart oh his struggle for human rights. It is with this intention only he went to Vaikom in Kerala and took an active part in the agitation on April, 1924 to claim the right of the lower class people to walk on the road going around the temple. It is with this intention only that Periyar spoke in favour of entry into the sanctum sanctorum of the temple in the seventees of the last century. In a meeting at Trichy on 16th November, 1969, he asked the audience:

" Do we have the guts and rights to go inside the temple where the image of god is. Eh! Sudhras! Stand outside, he orders. Has anyone a sense of shame, self-respect and dignity? If you have a self-respect, spit out the very name of god "

The impact of Thanthai Periyar's fight for the human right, be it in temple or elsewhere ultimately took concrete shape in making the Tamil Nadu Assembely to pass a resolution on December, 2, 1970 that members of all castes and communities may become *archakas* of temples in Tamil Nadu.

Periyar was outrightly inimical to god. But he supported the Temple-entry. He was against religions. But he felt happy at the conversion of Adi-Dravidars into Islam and Buddhism. This may seem on the surface paradoxical. This essay is an attempt to explain why and how of these matters. Periyar was a cerebral thinker. To understand him is to be conscious of a genius. This consciousness has relevance for ever to disseminate what Periyar stood for.

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வைக்கமும் பெரியாரும்

முனைவர். அ.கா. காளிமுத்து ★

மார்த்தாண்டசேகரன் **

இந்தியாவில் குறிப்பாக தென்னகத்தில் 19 மற்றும் 20ஆம் நூற்றாண்டுகளில் நிகழ்ந்த கோவில் நுழைவுப் போராட்டங்களுக்கும் மத்தியகால இந்தியாவின் பக்தி இயக்கத்திற்கும் வேறுபாடுகள் பல உண்டு. பக்தி இயக்கம் சராணாகதி தத்துவத்தை அடிப்படையாகக் கொண்டது. சரணாகதி என்பது ஆண்டவனுக்கும் ஆண்டைக்கும் பொருந்தும். ஆனால் கோவில் நுழைவுப் போராட்டங்கள் பக்திக்கு முன்னுரிமை தருவதைவிட ஏற்றத்தாழ்வற்ற சமூகத்தை ஏற்படுத்துவதற்கும் குறிப்பாக தாழ்த்தப்பட்டவரின் நிலை உயர்வதற்குமே முன்னுரிமை அளித்தன. ஆண்டாண்டு காலமாக சரணாகதியை வலியுறுத்தி வந்த வேத சாத்திர அடிப்படையிலமைந்த தளைகளிலிருந்து அடித்தள மக்களை விடுவிப்பதே நவீன தென்னிந்திய சீர்திருத்த இயக்கங்களின் நோக்கங்களாக இருந்தன என்பது உண்மை. மிகையல்ல.

"சூத்திரர்களையும் ஆதி சூத்திரர்களையும் அவர்களுக்குரிய மனித உரிமைகளை அறிய வைத்து பிராமணிய சாத்திரங்கள் அவர்கள் மீது திணித்த சமய மற்றும் உணர்வுரீதியான அடிமைத்தனத்திலிருந்து அவர்களை விடுவிப்பது" தான் ஜோதிராவ் பூலே 1873ஆம் ஆண்டு தொடங்கிய சத்திய சோடக் சமாஜத்தின் முக்கிய குறிக்கோள். இதுவே தென்னகத்தின் பிற சீர்திருத்த அமைப்புகளுக்கும் குறிக்கோளாக இருந்தது. **"வேதங்களும் சாத்திரங்களும் சிறுபிள்ளை விளையாட்டு"** என்று வள்ளலார் கூறும்போது சாதிய ஏற்றத்தாழ்வுக்கு அவர் உடன்படவில்லை என்பது தெளிவாய்த் தெரிகிறது. *'தாழக்கிடப் போரை தற்காக்க'* என்ற வைகுண்ட சுவாமி வாக்கில் நசுக்கப்பட்டவர்களும் விடுதலை பெற வேண்டும் என்ற கருத்து புதைந்திருப்பதைக் காண முடிகிறது. ***"ஒரு கடவுள், ஒரு மதம் ஒரு ஜாதி"*** என்ற நாராயணகுருவின் வார்த்தைகளில் சமத்துவ சமூகமே சீர்திருத்த இயக்கத்தின் அடிப்படை நோக்கம் என்பது வெளிப்படை.

வேதங்களையும் சாத்திரங்களையும் ஏற்றுக்கொண்டு இடையே புகுந்துவிட்டதாகக் கருதப்பட்ட சமய சமூக சீர்கேடுகளை நீக்குவதற்கு வட இந்திய சீர்திருத்தவாதிகள் முயன்ற போது தென்னிந்தியாவில் வேத, சாத்திரங்களே சமூக அடிமைத் தளைக்கு காரணம், அவற்றிலிருந்து விடுதலை பெற்றால்தான் உண்மையான சமூக விடுதலை சாத்தியமாகும் என்ற

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கருத்தாக்கத்தின் அடிப்படையிலேயே சமய சமூக சீர்திருத்தவாதிகள் செயல்பட்டனர் என்பதை மனதில் கொண்டு கோவில் நுழைவுப் போராட்டங்களை அணுகவேண்டுவது அவசியம் என்பதை வலியுறுத்தும் முகமாக "வைக்கமும் பெரியாரும்" என்னும் இக்கட்டுரை அமைந்துள்ளது.

அதற்கேற்ப வைக்கம் போராட்டம் ஒடுக்கப்பட்ட மக்கள் பொது வீதிகளில் தடையின்றி நடந்து செல்வதற்கு மறுக்கப்பட்ட உரிமையை வேண்டி நடத்திய போராட்டமாக இருப்பதுடன் இந்திய வரலாற்றில் சாதிய ஒடுக்கு முறைகளுக்கு எதிராக நடந்த முதல் போராட்டமாகவும் அமைந்தது. காங்கிரசு மகா சபைக்கு செல்வாக்குத் தேடி தந்தது இப்போராட்டம் தான். சமூகத்தில் பெரியார் பெரிய புரட்சியை ஏற்படுத்துவதற்கு அடிகோலாக இருந்ததும் இப்போராட்டம் தான். அதனால் தான் இதுப்பற்றி நாம் ஆராய வேண்டியதிருக்கிறது. அதற்கு முன்னர் இம்மாதிரி போராட்டங்களுக்கு காரணமாக அமைந்துள்ள சாதிய முறை பற்றி ஓரளவிற்கு அறிய வேண்டியதும் அவசியமாகிறது.

கங்கைச் சமவெளியில் ஆரியர்கள் உருவாக்கிய சாதி அமைப்பு இந்தியாவின் மூலை முடுக்கெங்கும் நாளாவட்டத்தில் பரவி இந்தியச்சமூகப் பொருளாதார வரலாற்றில் ஆழமான தாக்கத்தை ஏற்படுத்தியது. பிராமணர், ஷத்திரியர், வைசியர், சூத்திரர், ஆதிசூத்திரர் என்போர் அடங்கிய படிநிலைச் சமூக அமைப்பு தர்மசாத்திர விற்பன்னர்களால் உயர்நிலைச் சாதியின் மேம்பாட்டை நிலை நாட்டுவதற்கென்றே வடிவமைக்கப்பட்டது. சமூக உயர்நிலைக்குப் பொருளாதாரமும் அடிப்படை என்பதால் மேல் சாதிகள் நில உரிமைகளைப் பெற்றன. அடிநிலைச் சாதியினர் உரிமை மறுக்கப்பட்டவர்களாய் மட்டுமில்லாமல் மேல்நிலையினருக்கு அடிமைப்பட்டவர்களாக இருக்க வேண்டுமென்று சாத்திரங்கள் கூறுகின்றன. இதன் விளைவாக சூத்திரன் உயர் சாதியனர்களுக்குத் தொண்டு ஊழியம் செய்ய வேண்டுமென்றும் அதற்குக் கூலியாக மிஞ்சிவிடும் உணவையும் பழைய கந்தல் துணியைத்தான் பெற வேண்டுமென்று கூறுகின்றன.[1]

இம்மாதிரியான சமூக அமைப்பு தமிழகத்தில் இருந்தாலும் கேரளத்தில் இது மிகக் கடுமையாக இருந்தது. கேரளத்தில் இச்சாதிய அமைப்பு, கீழ் சாதி மக்களை அண்டாமை, தீண்டாமை, பாராமை போன்ற கொடுமைகளுக்கு உட்படுத்தியது. கேரளச் சமூக அமைப்பில் நம்பூதிரி பிராமண்ர்கள் உயர்வான நிலையிலிருந்தனர். நில உடைமையாளர்களான இவர்களை எவரும் எதிர்க்க முடியாது. கேரளத்தில் அரசர்கள் மாறலாம், அரசுகள் மாறலாம் நம்பூதிரிகள் ஆதிக்கம் மாத்திரம் மாறுவதில்லை என்ற நிலை இருந்து வந்தது.[2]

இவர்களுக்கு அடுத்த நிலையில் உள்ளவர்கள் நாயர்கள். ஆரம்பத்தில் நம்பூதிரிகள் குடியேறி வந்த காலத்தில் அவர்களது ஆதிக்கத்தை ஏற்றுக்கொண்டமையால் நாயர்கள் பிற சூத்திர்களைவிட உயர்வான நிலையில் வைத்து 'சத்' சூத்திரர்கள் என்று அழைக்கப்பட்டனர்.

ஆரம்பகாலத்தில் நம்பூதிரிகளை எதிர்த்த பிற சூத்திரச் சாதியினர் அனைவரும் தாழ்நிலையில் வைக்கப்பட்டனர். அவர்களில் குறிப்பிடத்தக்கவர்கள் ஈழவர்கள் ஆவர். அவர்கள் கேரளத்தின மக்கள் தொகையில் பெரும்பான்மையினராய் உள்ளனர். கேரளத்தின் வைதீகச் சமூக அமைப்பு இவர்களுக்குண்டான உரிமைகளை கொடுக்க மறுத்தது. உதாரணமாக அவர்கள் உயர்தரமான ஆடைகள் மற்றும் நகைகள் அணிதல் முதலியவற்றிற்குத் தடை விதித்தது. இவர்களுக்கு கல்வி மறுக்கப்பட்டதோடு இச்சாதியைச் சேர்ந்த பெண்கள் தோள் சேலைகள் அணியவும் அனுமதிக்கப்படவில்லை.

இவர்களுக்கும் கீழ்நிலையில் உள்ளவர்கள் தாம் பஞ்சமர்கள். அவர்கள் அடிமைகளாகவே வாழ்ந்தனர். அவர்களுக்கும் சமுதாயத்தில் ஈழ்வர்களைப் போன்று உரிமைகள் மறுக்கப்பட்டன. வேறு சில கொடுமைகளும் இவர்களுக்கு இழைக்கப்பட்டன. அவர்கள் நிலக்கிழார்களுக்குச் சொந்தமான பொருள்களாகவே கருதப்பட்டனர். அவர்களை விற்கவும், அடமானம் வைக்கவும் நிலக்கிழார்களுக்கு உரிமையுண்டு. இவ்வடிமைச்சாதிகளிலும் கூட ஏற்றத்தாழ்வுகள் இருந்தன. இவர்களில் முதலில் கூறப்படுபவர்கள் புலையர்கள். கேரள விவசாயம் இவர்களைத்தான் நம்பியிருந்தது. இவர்களுக்கு அடுத்த நிலையில் உள்ளவர்கள் பறையர்கள். அவர்களுக்கு அடுத்த நிலையில் உள்ளவர்கள் நாயடிகள் மற்றும் உள்ளாடர்கள் ஆவர்.[3]

இவர்களிடையே உள்ள ஏற்றத்தாழ்வுகளை மேல் ஜாதியினர்கள் தங்களுக்குச் சாதகமாக பயன்படுத்திக்கொண்டு தீண்டாமை, அண்டாமை, பாராமை போன்ற கொடுமைகளை இவர்கள் மீது புகுத்தினர். அதன்விளைவாக அங்குள்ள அடிமைச் சாதியினர்கள் பிராமணர்கள் மற்றும் நாயர்கள் கண்களில் படக்கூடாதென்பதற்காக ஊருக்கு ஒதுக்குப்புறமான புதர்கள் மற்றும் அடர்ந்த காட்டு வழியாகத்தான் கடந்து செல்வர். இவற்றையும் மீறி அவர்கள் நாயரையோ, பிராமணரையோ எதிரில் சந்திக்க நேருமானால் வெகுதூரத்தில் தாங்கள் வரும்பொழுதே அருகாமையில் உள்ள புதர்களில் மறைந்து உரக்க ஊளையிட்டு தங்கள் வருகையை அவர்களுக்குத் தெரிவிக்க வேண்டும்.[4]

இம்மாதிரியான சூழ்நிலைகள் கேரளத்திலும் நமது நாட்டில் பிற இடங்களில் வெவ்வேறு விதமாக நிலவிய போதிலும் ஐரோப்பியக் கிறுத்துவச் சபைகள் நமது நாட்டிற்கு வந்ததற்குப்பின்னர் இங்குள்ள சாதிய ஏற்றத்தாழ்வுகளையும் அடிமை முறையையும் கடுமையாக தாக்கியதோடல்லாமல், அவைகளை மாற்றியமைக்க கீழ்ச்சாதியினரின் அறியாமையைப் போக்க வேண்டுமென்பதற்காக கல்வி நிலையிங்களைத் தோற்றுவித்து சாதியக் கொடுமைகள் பற்றிய உணர்வை ஏற்படுத்தின. நமது நாட்டில் 19ஆம் நூற்றாண்டில் பரவிய மேற்கத்தியக் கல்வியும் இவற்றை நன்கு உணர்த்தியது. அதனால் அம்மக்களிடையே ஒரு விழிப்பு நாளாவட்டத்தில் ஏற்பட்டது.[5]

அதன்பயனாக நமது நாட்டில் பல சீரிய சிந்தனையாளர்கள் தோன்றினர். அவர்களில் நாராயணகுரு என்பவர் கேரளத்தில் 19ஆம் நூற்றாண்டு பிற்பகுதியிலும் 20ஆம் நூற்றாண்டு ஆரம்ப காலத்திலும் கீழ்நிலை சாதிமக்களிடையே குறிப்பாக ஈழவ மக்களிடையே தீண்டாமை போன்ற கொடுமைகளை களைந்தெறிய அமைதியான முறையில் ஒரு புரட்சியை நடத்தி வந்தார். நாராயண குரு இவ்இயக்கத்தை காந்தியடிகளுக்கு முன்னரே நமது நாட்டில் நடத்தி வந்தார். இவ்விஷயத்தில் காந்தியடிகளைவிடவும் அவர் தெளிவாக இருந்தார். தீண்டாமைக்கு சாதிய அமைப்பு தான் காரணம் என்பதால் அதை அடியோடு ஒழிக்க வேண்டுமென்று கூறினார். இதனைத்தான் பெரியாரும் வலியுறுத்துகிறார். ஆனால் காந்தியடிகளோ தீண்டாமை ஒழிப்பு தேவை என்றாலும் சாதி அமைப்பும் தேவை என்று கூறினார். அதன்படி ஆன்மீகத்தில் நாராயண குரு ஒரு புதிய திருப்பத்தையே கொண்டு வந்தார். கீழ்சாதியினர்கள் உயர் சாதியினருடன் சமநிலை பெறவேண்டுமானால், மூடநம்பிக்கைகளை ஒழிப்பதுடன் உயர்சாதியினர் கீழ்சாதியினரை வணங்கவிடாமல் தடுக்கும் சிவனையும் விஷ்ணுவையும் வணங்குவதுடன் உயர் சாதியினர்களின் வேதங்கள் பிராமணங்கள் ஆகியவைகளை கற்றுக்கொண்டு சமநிலையை அடையலாம் என்று கூறியதுடன், ஈழவர்கள், கீழ்சாதியினர்கள் ஆகியோர்களுக்காக கோவில்களையும் நிறுவினார். அவற்றில் அனைத்து தாழ்ந்த சாதியினரும் வணங்க ஏற்பாடு செய்தார். அவர்கள் கல்வியறிவைப் பெற கல்வி நிறுவனங்கள் ஏற்படவும் நடவடிக்கைகள் எடுத்தார்.[6]

இப்புரட்சி கேரளத்தில் ஈழவர்களிடம் மாத்திரமல்லாமல் அனைத்து கீழ்சாதியினர்களிடமும் பெரிய மாற்றத்தை ஏற்படுத்தியது. அதன் விளைவாக திரு. நாராயண தர்ம பரிபாலன யோகம் என்ற ஒரு அமைப்பு உருவாயிற்று. இப்பரிபாலனத்திற்கு அரசின் அரிந்தேற்பும் கிடைத்தது. இப்பரிபாலனம் ஆரம்பத்தில் கோவில் நுழைவுப் போராட்டத்தை ஆரம்பிப்பதைவிட

கோவிலுக்கு அருகில் உள்ள வீதிகளில் கீழ் சாதியினர் செல்வதற்கான உரிமையை பெற விரும்பியது. இதற்காக சட்டபூர்வமான முறையில் விண்ணப்பங்கள் சமர்ப்பித்ததோடு அரசு அவைகளில் குரல்களும் எழுப்பப்பட்டன. இவற்றில் வெற்றியடையாததால் நேரடி நடவடிக்கையில் ஈடுபட வேண்டிய சூழ்நிலை ஏற்பட்டது.[7]

அதன்பயனாக இப்பிரச்சனையை அரசியல் ரீதியாகப் போராட வேண்டுமென்பதற்காக டி.கே. மாதவன் போன்ற ஈழவத் தலைவர்கள் இந்திய தேசிய காங்கிரசு மகாசபையை அணுக விரும்பினார். 1923ஆம் ஆண்டில் கூடிய காக்கிநாடா காங்கிரசு மகாசபைக்கு இப்பிரச்சனையை எடுத்துச் சென்றனர். காந்தியடிகளும் காங்கிரசு மகாசபையை தீண்டாமை ஒழிப்பு போன்ற ஆக்க ரீதியான செயல்களில் ஈடுபடும்படி அறிவுரை கூறியிருந்தார். அதன்படி இந்திய தேசிய காங்கிரசு மகாசபை கேரள காங்கிரசு மகாசபையை இவற்றில் ஈடுபட அனுமதியளித்தது. 1924ஆம் ஆண்டு சனவரி திங்கள் 24ஆம் நாள் எர்ணா குளத்தில் கூடிய கேரள காங்கிரசு டி.கே.மாதவன், நீலகண்ட நம்பூதிரிபாத், கேளப்ப நாயர் ஆகிய உறுப்பினர்கள் அடங்கிய தீண்டாமை ஒழிப்புக்குழு ஒன்றை ஏற்படுத்தியது.[8] அவர்கள் அறப்போருக்குத் தீண்டாமையும், பாராமையும் தீவிர வழக்கத்திலுள்ள வைக்கத்தை தங்களது போராட்டத்தளமாக தேர்ந்தெடுத்தனர்.[9]

வைக்கம் என்ற ஊர் திருவிதாங்கூர் அரசின் கீழ் உள்ள சிற்றூர். அங்குள்ள சிவன் கோவிலைச் சுற்றி நான்கு புறங்களிலும் வீதிகள் அமைந்துள்ளன. அவ்வீதிகளில் கீழ் சாதியினர்கள் நடமாட அனுமதிக்கப்படவில்லை. கோவில் எதிரில் உள்ள தெருக்களில் அரசு அலுவலகங்கள், காவல் நிலையங்கள் முதலியன இருந்தன. இவ்விடங்களுக்குக்கூட கீழ் சாதியினர்கள் செல்ல அனுமதிக்கப்படவில்லை. அதனால் இதனை எதிர்த்து அறப்போர் நடத்த வேண்டிய சூழ்நிலை ஏற்பட்டது.[10]

அதன்படி இப்போராட்டக்குழு 1924ஆம் ஆண்டு பிப்ரவரித்திங்கள் 29ஆம் நாள் ஒரு பொதுக்கூட்டத்தை நடத்தியது. அதன்பின் 30.3.1924 ஆம் நாள் அறப்போராட்டம் ஆரம்பமாயிற்று. டி.கே. மாதவன், கேளப்ப நாயர் ஆகியோர்கள் தலைமையின் கீழ் தடை செய்யப்பட்ட வீதிகளை நோக்கி புரட்சி வீரர்கள் சென்றனர். அப்படிச் சென்றவர்களைக் காவல் துறையினர் கைது செய்தனர். இதே போல் 31.3.1924ல் நடைபெற்ற போராட்டத்தில் ஒரு நாயரும் இரு ஈழவத் தொண்டர்களும் தடையை மீறி சென்றதற்காகக் கைது செய்யப்பட்டனர்.[11]

இதற்கிடையில் போராட்டக்குழு பல தடைகளையும் சந்தித்த போதிலும் 1924 ஏப்ரல் 7ஆம் நாள் போராட்டம் நடத்த முடிவு

செய்யப்பட்டது. இத்தருணத்தில் திருவாளர்கள் கே.பி. கேசவமேனனும் மாதவனும் தடைசெய்யப்பட்ட வீதிகளில் மீறிச் சென்றதற்காக ஆறு மாதம் சிறைத்தண்டனை கொடுக்கப்பட்டு திருவனந்தபுரம் மத்திய சிறையில் அடைக்கப்பட்டனர்.[12] அதன்பின் ஏப்ரல் மாதம் 11ஆம் நாளன்று போராட்டத் தலைவர்களான கே.ஜி. நாயர், ஜார்ஜ் ஜோசப், செபஸ்டீன் போன்றோர்களை அரசு கைது செய்தது. இவ்வாறாக தலைவர்கள் பலரை அரசு தொடர்ந்து கைது செய்தமையால் போராட்ட நடவடிக்கைகளில் தொய்வு ஏற்பட்டது. போராட்ட குழுவிற்கு பண தட்டுப்பாடும் இருந்தது. இந்நிலையில் போராட்டத்தை நிறுத்தக்கூடிய சூழ்நிலை கூட நிலவியது.

இச்சமயத்தில்தான் இப்போராட்டத்திற்கு உயிர் கொடுக்க போராட்டக் குழுவின் முக்கிய தலைவர்களான ஜார்ஜ் ஜோசப்பும், கேசவ மேனனும் சேர்ந்து கையொப்பமிட்ட கடிதம் ஒன்றை பெரியார் ஈ.வெ.இராமசாமி நாயக்கருக்கு அனுப்பி அதில் அவரை பேராட்டத்திற்கு தலைமை தாங்கும்படி அழைப்பை விடுத்தனர். ஈரோட்டிற்கு வந்த இக்கடிதம் பெரியார் மதுரை மாவட்டத்தில் உள்ள பண்ணைப்புரம் கிராமத்தில் பேசிக் கொண்டிருந்த போது அவர் கைக்கு கிடைத்தது. உடனே பெரியார் தனது சுற்றுப்பயணத்தை ஒத்திபோட்டுவிட்டு தனது தமிழ்நாடு காங்கிரசு தலைமைப் பதவியை இராஜாஜியை ஏற்றுக்கொள்ளும்படி கடிதம் எழுதி வைத்துவிட்டு 14.8.1924ம் நாள் வைக்கம் வந்து சேர்ந்தார்.[13]

பெரியார் வைக்கம் வந்து சேர்ந்தவுடன் வைக்கத்தைச் சுற்றியுள்ள கிராமங்களில் பொதுக்கூட்டங்கள் நடத்தி தீண்டாமை ஒழிப்பின் முக்கியத்துவம் பற்றி மக்களிடம் விளக்கிக் கூறினார். ஒரு கூட்டத்தில் கீழ்சாதி மக்கள் தெருவில் போவதால் தீட்டுப் பட்டுவிடும் என்று கருதும் '**வைக்கத்தப்பனை துவைக்கனும்**' என்று காரசாரமாகப் பேசினார்.[14] கேரள காங்கிரசு அமைந்த போராட்டக்குழுவில் பெரியார், கோவை அய்யாமுத்து, எம்பெருமாள் நாயுடு, மன்னத் பத்மநாபன் போன்றோர் அங்கத்தினர்களாக இருந்து செயல்பட்டனர். திருவாங்கூர் அரசின் கீழ் உள்ள அனைத்து கிராமங்களுக்கும் நகரங்களுக்கும் இக்குழு சென்று பிரச்சாரம் செய்தது. திருவாங்கூர் அரசு, அந்நாட்டு மன்னருக்கு பெரியார் நண்பராக இருந்தாலும், அவர் மீது கோபம் கொண்டு அவரது பொதுக்கூட்டங்களுக்குத் தடைகள் விதித்தது. பலமுறை அவருக்குச் சிறைத் தண்டனைகளையும் கொடுத்தது.[15]

இம்மாதிரியான தடைகளுக்கிடையே பெரியார் தொடர்ந்து பொதுக்கூட்டங்களை நடத்தி வந்தார். காவல்துறையும் அவரது நடவடிக்கைகளை கண்காணித்து வந்தது. பெரியார் தொடர்ந்து பிரச்சாரங்கள் செய்து வந்ததால் அவர் நடத்தும் கூட்டங்களுக்கு பி.சி.26 என்ற தடை உத்தரவை பிறப்பித்தது. இந்த விதி தமிழ்நாட்டில் இருக்கும் 144 தடை

உத்திரவிற்கு சமமானது. இத்தடை உத்தரவுகளையும் மீறி பெரியார் பேசினார். இவருடன் கோவை அய்யாமுத்து அவர்களும் சட்டத்தை மீறனார். இதற்காக இவ்விருவரையும் ஒரு மாத கடுங்காவலில் அருவிக்குத்தி என்ற ஊரில் சிறையில் அடைத்தனர். பெரியார் சிறையிலிருந்து வெளியே வந்தவுடன் அவரது முதல் மனைவி நாகம்மாள் பல கூட்டங்களில் பேசி ஆதரவு திரட்டினார்கள். இவர்களைத் தொடர்ந்து பெரியாரின் தங்கை கண்ணம்மாளும் இப்போராட்டத்தில் ஈடுபட்டு பிரச்சாரம் செய்தார்கள்.[16]

இதன்பயனாக கிளர்ச்சிக்கு பெரும் அளவில் ஆதரவு பெருகி நூற்றுக்கணக்கான தொண்டர்கள் மிகுந்த உற்சாகத்துடன் போராட்டத்தில் கலந்து கொண்டனர். நாராயணகுருவின் *ஸ்ரீ நாராயன தர்ம பலிபாலன யோகமும்* இப்போராட்டத்தில் தீவிரமாக இறங்கியது. அறப்போரில் ஈடுபட்டவர்களுக்கு உணவளிப்பதற்காக திருவாங்கூர் அரசின் மையப் பகுதியில் உள்ள மைய நாட்டு ஈழவப் பெண்கள் "*பிடி அரிசி*" இயக்கத்தை நடத்தினர்.[17] நாயர்கள் சங்கமும் கூட இப்போராட்டத்திற்கு ஆதரவு கொடுத்தது.

இவ்விரு சங்கங்களும் இணைந்து ஒரு விண்ணப்பத்தைத் தயாரித்து 1924 மே மாதம் 16 ஆம் நாள் திருவாங்கூர் அரசின் திவானிடம் சமர்பித்தன. அதில் வைக்கம் கோவிலைச் சுற்றியுள்ள வீதிகளில் அனைத்துச் சாதியினரும் செல்வதற்கு அனுமதி அளிக்க வேண்டுமென்றும், அவ்வீதிகளில் தாழ்த்தப்பட்டவர்கள் செல்லக் கூடாது என்று எழுதி வைத்திருக்கும் அறிவிப்பு பலகைகள் உடனடியாக நீக்கப்பட வேண்டும் என்று கூறப்பட்டு இருந்தது. அதற்கு ஆதரவாக பல காரணங்களும் கூறப்பட்டிருந்தன. ஆனால் இவ்விண்ணப்பத்தை அரசு கண்டு கொள்ளவில்லை.[18]

அரசின் இச்செயலைக்கண்டு பலர் அரசின் நடவடிக்கைகளை குறை கூறிப்பேசியதுடன் போராட்டத்திற்கு மேலும் ஆதரவு கொடுக்க முனைந்தனர். வெளிநாடுகளில் வாழும் மலையாளிகளும் இச் சாதிக் கொடுமைகளுக்கெதிராக தங்கள் ஆதரவைக் காட்டும் வண்ணம் நிதி உதவிகள் செய்து வந்தனர். இவைதவிர, ஒவ்வொரு நாளும் 200 அல்லது 300 தொண்டர்கள் பல இடங்களிலிருந்து வந்து இப்போராட்டத்தில் கலந்து கொண்டனர். போராட்டக் குழுவினர் பெரிய பந்தல்கள் அமைத்து அவற்றில் அவர்களுக்கு தினமும் உணவளித்து வந்தனர்.

இம்மாதிரியான சூழ்நிலைகள் இருக்கும் பொழுது பெரியார் இப்போராட்டத்தில் ஈடுபட்டு நற்பெயர் ஈட்டுவதை இராஜாஜி போன்றவர்கள் விரும்பவில்லை. இராஜாஜி அகில இந்தியப்பிரச்சனையான தீண்டாமை ஒழிப்பிற்கு வைக்கம் போராட்டம்

முன்மாதிரியாக செயல்படுகிறது என்பதைக் கருதாமல் அதைக் கேரளத்தின் தலப்பிரச்சனையாகக் கருதி பெரியாரை போராட்டத்தை விட்டு தமிழகத்திற்கு வரும்படி கடிதம் எழுதிய தோடல்லாமல் காங்கிரசு இயக்கத்தின் தலைவர்களில் ஒருவரான சீனிவாச அய்யங்காரை வைக்கத்திற்கு அனுப்பி பெரியாரைத் தமிழ் நாட்டிற்கு திரும்ப வர ஏற்பாடு செய்தார்.[19] அதற்கு பெரியார் உடன்பட வில்லை என்பது குறிப்பிடதக்கதாகும். இதற்குள் போராட்டத்திற்கு ஆதரவு பெருகிக் கொண்டே வந்தது. தினமும் ஊர்வலமும் சத்யாக்கிரக பஜனைகளும் நடந்து வந்தன. பெரியாருக்கு உதவியாக நாகர்கோயிலைச் சேர்ந்த பயோனியர் பேருந்து உரிமையாளர் சேவு மற்றும் டாக்டர். எம்பெருமாள் நாயுடு போன்றோர் வைக்கத்தில் தங்கி செயல் பட்டு வந்தனர்.[20]

நாளடைவில் போராட்டத்திற்கு செல்வாக்கு பெருகி கொண்டே வந்தது. இதனால் அரசு போராட்டத் தலைவர்கள் மீது கடுமையான நடவடிக்கைகள் எடுத்தது. பெரியார் போன்ற தலைவர்களுக்கு ஆறுமாதச் சிறைத்தண்டனை அளிக்கப்பட்டு திருவனந்தபுரம் சிறையில் அடைக்கப்பட்டனர்[21] பெரியாருடன் தமிழ் நாட்டிலிருந்து சென்ற காங்கரசு பிரமுகர் டி.ஆர். கிருஷ்ணசாமி அய்யரும் ஜார்ஜ் ஜோசப்பும் சிறையலடைக்கப்பட்டனர். இவர்கள் சிறையிலிருக்கும் சமயத்தில் போராட்டத்தை நிறுத்துவதற்காக வைதீகர்கள் சத்ரு சங்காரயாகம் நடத்தினர். இதற்கிடையே 7-8-1924 ல் எதிர்பாராத விதமாக திருவாங்கூர் அரசர் திரு. மூலம் திரு நாள் காலமானார். அதன்பின் திரு. சித்திரைத் திருநாள் பதவி ஏற்றார். அவர் சிறியவராக இருந்தமையால் ராணி சேது லட்சுமிபாய் அவருக்குப் பதில் அரசு பொறுப்புகளைக் கவனித்துவந்தார். சித்திரைத் திருநாள் பதவிஏற்ற நாளன்று சிறையிலடைக்கப்பட்ட வைக்கம் சத்யாக்கிரகிகள் அனைவருக்கும் விடுதலையளிக்கப்பட்டது.[22]

இதற்காக போராட்டத் தலைவர்கள் செயல்படாமல் இருக்கவில்லை. சிறையிலிருந்து வெளியேவந்தவுடன் சத்தியாக்கிரக இயக்கத்தை மீண்டும் தொடங்கினர். பேராட்டக் குழு வைக்கத்திலிருந்து திருவனந்தபுரம் வரை ஒரு பேரணியாகச் சென்று திவானிடமும் இராணியிடமும் ஒரு பெரிய விண்ணப்பத்தைக் கொடுத்தனர். இப்பேரணிக்கு மன்னத்பத்மநாபன் தலைமை தாங்கி நடத்தினார். அதே நேரத்தில் வேறொரு பேரணியை சுசீந்திரத்திலிருந்து டாக்டர் எம்பெருமாள் நாயுடு தலைமை தாங்கி நடத்தினார். இப்பேரணியும் இராணியிடம் விண்ணபத்தை சமர்பித்தது. அவைகளில் வைக்கம் கோயிலைச் சுற்றியுள்ள வீதிகளில் கீழ்சாதியினர்கள் செல்ல அனுமதி வழங்கவேண்டுமெனக் கூறப்பட்டது. இவைகளை அரசுகண்டு கொள்ள வில்லை.[23] அரசு இவ்விஷயத்தில் எதிராக

இருந்தாலும் போராட்டக் குழு தளராமல் செயல்பட்டு வந்தது. அதனால் கீழ் சாதியினர்களைத் தவிர பிற சாதி இந்துக்களும் ஆதரவு கொடுத்தனர்.

இம்மாதிரியான சூழ்நிலைகளில் 1924 டிசம்பர் திங்களில் பெல்காமில் நடைபெற்ற அகில இந்தியக் காங்கிரசு மகா நாட்டில் காந்தியடிகள் தீண்டாமை ஒழிப்புக்கு முக்கியத்துவம் கொடுக்க வேண்டும் என்று கூறினார்.[24] அதன்படி காந்தியடிகள் வைக்கம் போராட்டத்திற்கு முடிவு காண விரும்பினார். அதற்காக எர்ணாகுளம் வந்து, அங்கிருந்து வைக்கம் வந்து சேர்ந்தார். காந்தியடிகள் இப்பிரச்சனையை சமரசம் மூலம் தீர்க்க வேண்டுமென விரும்பினார். அதற்காக வைக்கத்தில் உள்ள பிராமணர்களைச் சந்தித்துப் பேசினார். அதில் காந்தியடிகள் தோல்வியுற்றார்.[25] இதற்கிடையில் திருவாங்கூர் அரசும் வைக்கம் போராட்டம் சம்பந்நமாக உடன்பாட்டிற்கு வர விருப்பம் தெரிவித்து இராஜாஜிக்கு கடிதம் எழுதியது. இச்செய்தியை இராஜாஜி காந்தியடிகளுக்குத் தெரிவித்தார். இவையெல்லாம் பெரியாருக்கு பின்னர் தான் தெரிய வந்தன.

இப்பின்னணியில் காந்தியடிகள் 1925 ஆம் ஆண்டு மார்ச் மாதம் 8ஆம் நாள் திருவனந்தபுரம் சென்று திருவாங்கூர் இராணியுடன் நடத்திய சமரசச் பேச்சில் கலந்து கொண்டார். இப்பேச்சு வார்த்தை ஒருவார காலம் நடைபெற்றது. முடிவில் இராணியார் வைக்கம் கோவிலைச் சுற்றியுள்ள வீதிகளில், கிழக்கு வீதி தவிர்த்து தாழ்த்தப்பட்ட வகுப்பினர் செல்வதற்கு அனுமதி வழங்கினார். அதன்பின்னர் காந்தியடிகள் பெரியாரிடத்தில் இதைக் தெரிவித்தார். பெரியாரும் அம்முடிவிற்கு ஒப்புதல் தெரிவித்தார். இவ்வாறாக பெரியாரின் தலைமையின் கீழ் நடைபெற்ற வைக்கம் போராட்டம் மூலம் தாழ்த்தப்பட்டவர்கள் வைக்கம் கோவிலைச் சுற்றியுள்ள வீதிகளில் செல்வதற்கு உரிமை பெற்றனர். தாழ்த்தப்பட்டவர்கள் பின்னாளில் முழுமையான வெற்றியைப் பெற வைக்கம் போராட்டம் அடித்தளமைத்தது.

வைக்கம் போராட்டம் முடிவுக்கு வருவதற்கு காந்தியடிகளின் சமரசப் பேச்சு வார்த்தை ஓர் காரணம் என்றாலும் போராட்டத்திற்கு வீரியம் ஊட்டி வெற்றிப் பாதை நோக்கி அதை இட்டுச் சென்றவர் பெரியாரே என்பதையும் நினைவில் கொள்ளுவது அவசியமாகும். போராட்ட நிகழ்ச்சிகள் சீர்திருத்தம் குறித்த வடநாட்டு, மற்றும் தென்னாட்டு அணுகு முறைகளின் முரண்பாட்டை தெளிவாக் விளக்கியது. காந்தியடிகளும் பெரியாரும் வைக்கம் போராட்டத்தை வெவ்வேறு கோணங்களில் பார்த்தனர்.

போராட்டம் உச்ச நிலையை எட்டியும் உரிமைகள் கைகளுக்கு வரதா நிலையில் தாழ்த்தப்பட்டவர்கள் சமயம் மாறும் மனநிலையில் இருந்தனர். மாற்று சமயத்தவர்களும் இதற்காக காத்திருந்தனர். இந்து சமயம் பிளவுபடுவதை விரும்பாத காந்தியடிகள் தீண்டாமை ஒழிப்பில் தீவிரம் காட்டிய போதிலும் வைதீகர்களின் ஆதரவை இழக்க விரும்பாமல் வர்ணாஷ்ரம் தர்மத்தை கைவிட தயாராக இருக்கவில்லை என்பதை இப்போராட்டம் நிருபித்தது. மாற்று சமயத்தினருக்கு இந்துக்களிடையிலான இப்போராட்டத்தில் கலந்து கொள்ள உரிமையில்லை என காந்தியடிகள் வாதிட்டார்.

பெரியார் தீண்டாமைக்கு இந்து சமயத்தின் அங்கீகாரம் உண்டென்பதில் முழு நம்பிக்கை கொண்டிருந்தார். மனித உரிமைகளுக்கு தடையாய் இருந்தால் சமயத்தையும் எதிர்க்கும் மனநிலையில் அவர் இருந்தார். வைதீகர்கள் பெரியாரின் முக்கியத்துவத்தை குறைக்க பலவகையிலும் முயன்று வெற்றி பெற்றனர். காந்தியடிகள் இராணியோடு நடத்திய பேச்சு வார்த்தையில் பெரியார் கலந்து கொள்ளாமலிருக்க அவரை சென்னையில் சிறை வைக்கும் படி பார்த்துக் கொண்டனர். காங்கிரஸ் கட்சியும் வடஇந்திய ஏடுகளும் பெரியாரை இருட்டடிப்பு செய்தனர். 'யங் இந்தியா' என்ற காந்தியடிகளின் ஏட்டில் வைக்கத்தில் பெரியாரின் பங்கு பற்றிய செய்தி எதுவும் வெளியிப்படவில்லை. எனினும் வைக்கம் என்றால் நினைவில் நிற்பவர் பெரியார் மட்டுமே. வைக்கம் பெரியார் வாழ்க்கையில் ஓர் முக்கிய திருப்புமுனை. அவரது அரசியல், மற்றும் சமூகம் பற்றி சிந்தனைகள் வேறு தடம் நோக்கிச் செல்ல வைக்கம் போராட்டமே முக்கிய காரணம் என்றால் அது மிகையல்ல.

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Past And Present Challenges Of Temple Entry Movements In Tamil Nadu

Prof. S. Xavier *

The temples have played a predominant role in the socio-religious life of the people. The temple assemblies became the makers of rules and regulations. They remained as the arbiters of social status in the locality. The temples were closely associated with the institution of the caste system. As a matter of fact the ancient Tamils were not familiar with the brahmanical form of temples and ceremonies and also the traditional four-fold classification of society based on **caturvarna** system, expounded by the Aryans[1]. Later, people were restricted to enter inside of the temple by indicating their caste. Subsequently, some refused to accept this doctrine. This became the reason for temple entry movements. The temple entry movement was part of a broader social reform movement, the objective being to make people free from their downtrodden status. The movement reflected the anger of the suppressed downtrodden Hindus on their lower social status in the Hindu social hierarchy.

This paper analyzes on the past challenges, which we succeeded and present challenges, which we should contemplate now. Temple entry movement is an age-old phenomenon. It has its origin from Nandanar, one of the Nayanmars among sixty-three[2]. For that Nandanar might be put into the fire as believed by somebody. It became popular only during the end of the eighteenth century. It may be noted that the temple entry movement was not inspired and encouraged by the British Government in Tamil Nadu. The British were passive and interfered only under compelling situations, the temple entry movements was, therefore, mainly led by the Tamils, especially the Nadars. Hence, the temple entry movement was a voluntary social reform movement. It was not an anti-Brahmin movement, but a movement to get social equality on par with the Brahmins and other caste-Hindus. In fact, the foundations of this movement were laid on the principles of egalitarianism, humanism, and social equality[3].

Reprimand of Dr. Ambedkar

Difference of opinions prevailed among the leaders and social activists on the temple entry movement. Among them Ambedkar warned his people not

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to get lost in the temple entry and inter-dining. He wanted them to solve their economic roblems; because the entry would not give them economic security[4]. Following were the resolutions of the Amaravathi Temple Entry Movement Conference held at Bombay on November 13, 1927 under the chairmanship of Ambedkar.

(1) Dalits do not have separate temples. Hence, the need of the hour is entry in to all the temples
(2) The worship and performance of sacrifices is to be equal to all. And they (Dalits) should be permitted to touch the idols and gods and god desses[5].

These are the reprimands of Ambedkar. But still these are not accomplished. Therefore, new method has to be devised to reach the success of temple entry movements.

Accomplishments:
Movement Against Caste System and Untouchability

Rigid observance of caste system lead to the practice of untouchability. People in order to challenge the caste system they question the baseless practice of untouchability through temple entry movements.

It was the occupational division of the Aryans that justified the **varnas** as brahmanas, kshatriyas and vaisyas. They were given the name **savarnas** or high castes. The sudras who belonged to the fourth group of people were mostly common labourers and slaves and were considered unfit to perform the Vedic ceremonies. Since the sudras were denied the right to wear the sacred thread and the right to perform vedic rituals, they came to be called **avarnas**[6]. The first three **varnas** constituted the **savarna** group. Among them, only the Brahmins were entitled to officiate the vedic rituals, though the other two had been given the right to wear sacred thread[7]. The **dharmasastras** put heavy inhibitions on the **avarnas** and the most important one was that they were not allowed to worship the idol in the temples[8]. By means of long struggle, these untouchables got permission to worship the idol in the temples. They are even granted right to go up to the entrance of the sanctum sanctorum. Thus temple entry resolves the problem of untouchabiltiy somehow.

Movement Condemns the Holiness of Brahmin People

Nadars pioneered this movement. The search for new identity led the Nadars to two courses of action. Many of them abandoned the Hindu fold, converted themselves to Christianity, and emerged as leaders of the Christian community. At the same time, the rest of the Nadars decided to remain within the Hindu fold and wrest for them a status of respectability. Towards this end, they adopted different methods. They submitted documents in support of their claims. They adopted the powers and privileges enjoyed by the caste-Hindus like the palanquin, wearing of sacred thread and claimed a Kshatriya descent. Some of them became vegetarians[9]. The temple entry movement contributed to the promotion of solidarity and unity among the Nadars. It was not an anti-Brahmin movement, but a movement to get social equality on par with the Brahmins and other caste-Hindus[10]. In some way, it questioned the holiness of the Brahmin people. The worship of Vaigunda Swamigal[11] is an apt example to denote this kind of revolution.

Temple Entry gave Social Status

The objective of the temple entry movement was to make people free from their downtrodden status. It became an instrument of social emancipation for the downtrodden Tamils. The temple entry movement and the other movements of the downtrodden Tamils had a common approach, namely the improvement of their social status. The causes and consequences of the temple entry movement reflected the inter-relatedness of the social reform movements of the downtrodden Tamils[12].

Shook the Very Basic Structure of Caste System

The temples were closely associated with the institution of the caste system. The ancient Tamils were not familiar with the brahmanical form of temples and ceremonies. On the other hand, they were accustomed to the occupational division of society. It was a harmonious classification for the effective functioning of the society. Therefore, Ambedkar rightly pointed out that the outcaste is a by-product of the caste system.... Nothing can emancipate the outcaste except the destruction of the caste system[13]. Contrary to Aryans practice, no distinction was made on the basis of birth and everything was decided on merit, ability, and personality in Tamil Nadu. Untouchability, unapproachability, unseeability and similar customs were unknown to the ancient Tamils. Ancient Tamil society has not heard of caste distinctions, dis

putes, and religious dissensions[14]. In the course of temple entry movements, revolutionary leaders questioned temple as it was the very basic structure of caste system.

Alternative Method

Nadars conducted various temple entry movements to reach the respectable position in the society without considerable success. Even the British judicial systems do not provide any remedial measures. Hence, the Hindu Nadars built their own temples and appointed priests from their caste[15]. As an alternative method to escape from the brahmanical clutches, people devised and adopted this alternative means.

Constitutional Securities

Many of the leaders did lot for the elevation of untouchables to a respectable position by providing constitutional assurances. In Tamil Nadu on November 1, 1932, P. Subbaroyan moved a resolution in the Madras Legislative Council recommending that the temples should be open to *Harijans*. The resolution was passed by a majority vote and in the same year two bills were piloted in the Madras Legislative Council. In November 1932, one Narayan Nambiar introduced a bill entitled, the Removal of Depressed Classes' Religious Disabilities Bill aiming to throw open temples to the low caste Hindus. In December 1932, Subbaroyan introduced his Temple Entry Disabilities Removal bill[16].

On his assumption of office as Premier in 1937, C. Rajaji took initiative for temple entry. Accordingly, Act No. XXII known as the Temple Entry Act was enacted in September 1939, which declared that, "... no person should suffer any civil or criminal penalty or disadvantage by reason of any thing done in connection with such entry and worship". The Madras Temple Entry Authorization and Indemnity Act 1939 was repealed by Act No. V of 1947, which conferred the right on the excluded classes to enter the Hindu temples and offer worship[17].

Present Challenges
Economic Superiority

Mere temple entry has not changed the condition of the Tamil people.

People have given the chance to take part in the pujas and other ceremonies when they become economically in viable. Hence, economic viability should be the target of dalits. Economic status of the lower caste people should be strengthened. Hence the idea of temple entry movement will reach its success.

Assuring Priesthood Status

In spite of the massive strength, the low caste Hindus meekly accepted the spiritual and temporal predominance of the high caste Hindus and obeyed their arbitrary laws. They were afraid of questioning the long-established customs[18].

Mere temple entry and attainment of economic superiority will not yield fruitful result. Dalits and other lower caste people should be given the status of priesthood, which would destroy the very fundamental of Brahmanism that is Brahmin alone can act as a priest. If it is achieved the main aim of the people those who wanted to be in the Hindu fold despite of atrocities would be fulfilled. In general temples of Tamil Nadu and other places have highest values. As N. Subramanian observed a temple of Tamil people was a banker[19]. Numerous activities centres round the temple providing employment to a variety of people in the village still. The right to govern the temple vested at the hands of the Brahmins by hereditary in spite of governmental undertaking. It should be challenged now. The guarantee assured by law that all the human beings irrespective of caste could become a priest.

Pujas Through Tamil Language

Instead of using Sanskrit mantras and enchanting, Tamil and regional languages can be encouraged. It could lead to the priority of the local language as well as local representation in worshipping god.

Fulfilling Periyar's Vision

Temple entry movement should fulfill the vision of Periyar. He insisted temple entry movements not for religious benefits. Accomplishing the competence of untouchables on a par with the Brahmins was the main aim of Periyar. Since the very basic structure of caste system such as public roads, wells, schools, chatrams witnessed certain radical changes, the only place which is not at all changed i.e. temples[20]. That is why Periyar insisted on the temple entry movements. Periyar wanted to destroy the caste system through breaking the restric

tions of temple entry movements[21]. It is noticeable that Periyar opposed the theism, but beyond that, he wanted to develop the society with more humanistic thoughts. Hence, the vision of Periyar should be reached by all our efforts.

Change of the Temple Structure

The temple structure and temple trusteeship system should be completely changed. Since these temples have preserved the caste system and other social evils. Hence the structure of the temple should be altered, and it should give way to all without partiality and bias, without sex, caste, and other discriminations. The caste-based discrimination will be disappeared if the structure of the temple is changed. Among the caste-Hindus, the bhattars were alone permitted to enter the inner shrine or **garbagriha** of the temple. The vaishyas were allowed to go up to the steps leading to the **mahamandapa**. The rest of the Brahmins and kshatriya were allowed upto the **arthamandapa**. The sudras were permitted to go up to the **pradakshinavali**. It is said that the sudras were allowed to worship the deity from near the flagstaff and the other castes at the entrance of the **gopuram**[22]. Hence the structure of the temple should be completely changed.

Comprehensive Success

In spite of the governmental approval the temple entry movement has not reached its success. Andre Beteille opines that the passage of the temple entry movement in 1948 legally altered the relationship of the village with its principal temples. Legal rights notwithstanding, the Adi-Dravidas are still excluded from the Vishnu temples is some places. Sometime after the passage of the act tension mounted in the **agraharam** when a young non-Brahmin leader marched through the Brahmin streets up to the Vishnu temple at the head of a band of Adi-Dravidas[23]. It could be reached only by means of continuous struggle. B.S. Chandrababu rightly observed the reason for the success of Vaikom Satyagraha as due to the growing popularity that the movement has secured in Kerala and elsewhere[24]. To conclude temple entry movement is not a movement to get into the temples. It is merely a symbol victory. The unjust principles of the brahmanism should be broken. Only then, it would be named as really successful.

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Truth Behind The Temple Entry Movements In Tamil Nadu

Dr. T. Mathiyazhagan*

From time immemorial to the present day, the temples have played a predominant role in the socio-religious life of the people in Tamil nadu. They remained as the arbiters of social status in the locality and closely associated with the institution of the caste system. K.K. Pillay said, "If **varnashrama dharma** goes to the dogs in the removal of untouchability. I shall not shed a tear". The temples were the centres of luxury and eroticism. The high caste people were considered as the representative of god on earth.

The Brahmins were dominant people in the social setup in Tamil nadu. They made laws for their convenience and enjoyment. They became pleasure seekers and all properties including women became Parasurama's gift to them.

The rigidity of the caste system reached its zenith during the 18th and 19th centuries. Against the existing system, the socio-religious reform movements like Brahma Samaj in Bengal, Prarthana Samaj in Bombay were founded in 1867. In Punjab, Arya Samaj was founded by Swamy Dayanand Saraswathi in 1875 and condemned the caste system. Ramalinga Swamigal in the northern Tamil Nadu, Vaigunda Swamigal in the southern Tamil nadu and Sri Narayan Guru in Kerala condemned the caste system and preached the equality among the people. In spite of these reform movements, caste rigidity continued. The so-called low castes were not allowed to enter into the temples. Awakening came to the people and the temple entry movements gained momentum in the late 19th century.

The Nadars played a pioneer role in the temple entry movements in the second half of the 19th century. The Nadars were involved in the tapping of the Palmyra and consumed toddy, which was considered as '**panchamapathaka**'. And therefore, they were denied entry into the temples. With their economic growth in due course of time, they asserted their rights to temple entry which was denied to them for a long period on the grounds that they were socially low. They tried to secure freedom of worship and involved in agitations around the

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last decades of the nineteenth century in different parts of Tamil nadu. These agitations made a significant impact on Tamil society.

Aruppukkottai Agitation

The Nadars were not allowed to enter the Chokkanathaswami temple at Aruppukkottai, which remained under the control of Bhaskara Sethupathi, the Rajah of Ramnad. The Nadars were attacked by the caste Hindus. This episode reveals the glaring social disabilities of the Nadars who suffered in the 19th century and their attempt to attain freedom themselves. It also suggests the calculated measures of the caste Hindus for suppressing the Nadars by denying them the basic rights of freedom of worship and sacrament. So Nadars constructed Amirthalingeswarar temple in 1886 and its **kumbabhisekham** was held on 13th April 1907. 80% of the people in Sivalayas were Nadars and the Maravas were only 500. Yet the Nadars were not allowed to enter into the Vishwanatha Swami temple at Sivakasi. So the Nadars constructed their Bhadrakali Amman temple at Sivakasi.

Tiruchendur Subramaniya Swami Temple (1872)

The Nadars were not allowed to enter the Subramaniya Swami Temple at Tiruchendur. They broke coconuts and offered prayers from outside the temple. At last the Nadars were permitted to perform the rituals with the assistance of the priest near the flag mast only. This was considered to be the first victory for Nadars in gaining entry into the temples.

Madurai Meenakshi Temple (1874)

The Nadars of Madurai tried to assert their right to temple entry at the Meenaksshi temple. One Mooka Nadar entered the temple and worshipped goddess Meenakshi. The temple servants identified him as a Nadar and put him to death. The Nadars filed a criminal case against the temple servants. But the judge refused to approve of their right to temple entry. In 1890 once again the Nadars of Madurai and those of Thiruchuzhi made an attempt to enter the Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple at Madurai for which act they were fined by the distrct magistrate.

Kamudhi – Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple (1897)

Yet another attempt was made at Meenakshi Sundareswara temple at Kamudhi, a village located at Ramnad district. A group of 50 Nadars under the leadership of Irullappa Nadar from Kamudhi brought a **kavadi**. But their activities were prevented by the Rajah.

Vishwanathaswami Temple, Sivakasi (1897)

In 1897, the Nadars of Sivakasi began to wear the dhotis in the fashion of Brahmins, removed the pujaris of the Mariamman temple, and in their place, appointed a Nadar priest. In 1989, Nadars attempted to enter the Viswanathaswami temple at Sivakasi. This led to a riot in which four Maravars died and riots spread to several places. But the government tried to curtail the powers of the Nadars.

The Vaikom Satyagraha threw up two important leaders; Mannathy Padmanabha Pillai, a caste Hindu (Nair) who led the Nair Service Society and TK Madhavan, an Ezhava who was a staunch Gandhian and a leader of the Sri Narayana Guru Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP). When K.P. Kesava Menon, President of the Kerala Congress Committee and T.K. Madhavan started the agitation, all the agitators were put in prison by Pitt, Inspector General of Police and the agitation fizzled out.

At that time, EV Ramasamy received a letter from Kesava Menon and George Joseph to give life to the agitation. Then EV Ramasamy wrote a letter to C. Rajaji requesting him to act in his place as the President of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and launched the agitation. He was arrested. His wife Nagammai and his sister Kannammal explained the propaganda and he was released. Rajaji and Srinivasan advised E.V.R. not to participate in the Vaikom agitation.

From Punjab, Swami Siradhananda supported the struggle and offered financial aid to the agitators. Gandhiji also opposed the agitation and sent a letter to E.V.R. In the meantime, E.V.R was arrested and put in prison for ten months. Some Nambudiri Brahmins and Orthodox Hindus joined together and planned to counter the Vaikom agitation through what was called as Sathra Samhara Yagna. They spent money like water and performed the poojas.

Maharani wanted to settle the problem by means of discussion with E.V.R. But Dewan Raghavaiah of the State, who was Brahmin, stood in the way. So he wrote a letter to Gandhiji that E.V.R should not be allowed to talk to Maharani. Gandhiji went to Vaikom and settled the issue and finally the temple roads except those on the eastern side were opened to all the people. People of Tamil Nadu hailed E.V.R as "Vaikom Hero," a title offered by Thiru Vi.Ka, an erudite Tamil scholar, selfless Congress leader and prisoner in Labour Movement. While commenting on this K.K. Pillay says, "A Great achievement, this step marks an epoch in the history of Hinduism, and has set an inspiring example to the rest of India".

In 1932, P. Subbarayan moved a resolution in the Madras Legislative Council recommending that the temple should be thrown open to Harijans. Subbarayan introduced his Temple Entry Disabilities Removal Bill. In 1932, a poll among the high-caste Hindus was conducted in four cities of Tamil nadu, namely, Madurai, Kumbakonam, Kancheepuram and Srirangam, to elicit the opinion of the public in respect of temple entry. In Madurai, 5734 caste Hindus voted in the poll out of whom 4746 voted for Harijans. A group of leaders headed by Vaithiyanatha Iyer worked for it. However it took few years to create a favourable atmosphere for the low caste Hindus to enter the temples.

Rajaji took the initiative for temple entry by passing Temple Entry Act in 1939. In pursuance of the Act of 1939, the following temples were thrown open for the public worship.

1. Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple, Madurai.
2. Sri Kandaleswar temple, Madurai.
3. Sri Sundararaja Perumal temple, Valayapatti.
4. Sri Kalamugha Perumal temple, Madras.
5. Sri Bihadeeswar temple, Thanjavur.
6. Sri Tirukkuttaknathar Swami temple, Tirunelveli.
7. Sri Kasi Viswanathar temple, Tirunelveli.

Sri Rangam Temple Entry Issue, 1939

To conduct temple entry at Srirangam in the spirit of the Madras Temple Entry Act of 1939, T.S.S. Rajan, the then Minister for Hindu Religious Endowments in the Rajaji's ministry agitated in Srirangam. Apprehending that T.S.S. Rajan would drag along with him the Harijans into Sri Ranganathaswami temple,

a crowd of about 400 **sanatanists**, arranged obstructions with the shouting of abusive words against the agitating party. Amidst stone throwing and shrieking of the **sanatanist** womenfolk, the police partly succeeded in creating enough passage for T.S.S. Rajan and his men to enter the shrine.

When T.S.S. Rajan and his men came out of the temple after worship, the **sanatanist** womenfolk threw chilly powder into their eyes. He was roughly handled by the unruly womenfolk at the entrance of the temple. His dress was snatched and torn away by them. After the lathi charge by the police, many women were severely injured, three fell unconsciously and a number of others sustained minor injuries.

The **varsnashrama dharma** laid strong foundation for caste discrimination in India. In spite of the reform movements of Vaikundaswamigal, Ramalingaswamigal and Sri Narayanaguru in Kerala, the temple entry became the dream of the people of downtrodden. Many temple entry movements had taken place before and after the Vaikom Satyagraha. To some extent, these agitations permitted the low caste to enter into the temples. But the entry into the sanctum sanctorum remains a life ambition of the deprived sections of the society in Tamil nadu.

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Temple Entry Movement in Kamudi

Prof. K. Selvaraj*

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the role of Kamudi in the temple Entry Movement. Kamudi is a one of the taluk headquarters of the Ramanathapuram district and also one of the ruling areas of Sethupathis of Ramnad. It is also a birth place of the great national leader, Muthturamalinga Thevar. Kamudi is situated on the south bank of river Gundar at 15km west of Mudukulathur, 60 km west of Ramanathapuram and 30 km south east of Aruppukkottai.

In Kamudi Taluk, villages are dominated by the Marava community people. But in Kamudi town, Nadar community is dominant[1]. The main occupation of the Nadars was tapping toddy and later they switched to different business. As they were connected with the preparation of toddy for a long time, they were strictly prohibited from entering the compounds of temples consecrated to Brahminical deities[2].

In Kamudi each community has a separate temple for worship. Temple Entry attempt in Kamudi was held at Meenakshi Sundreswarar temple in May 1897. This temple was built by Sundarapandia, a Pandya King[3]. During the period of Muthuramalinga Sethupathi, renovations and repairs were executed. Nearly thirty villages were granted to the Brahmins for the maintenance and poojas[4].

In the history of Kamudi, temple entry attempt represents an important phase. Kamudi began to emerge as one of the major trading centres in Tamil Nadu by the late nineteenth century. As middle men and money lenders, the Nadars rose in economic power and became a merchant community. When the Nadars in Kamudi sought the recognition of high status, the Maravars, the dominant caste of the region, used their strength against the aspirant community. As the increasing wealth of the Nadar merchant community widened the gap between the economic status and their traditional position in the hierarchy of ritual purity, the Nadars sought to bring their social status through imitation of the brahmanical customs of the higher classes[5]. The Nadars' claims to higher status was brought to its logical end through Kamudi temple entry case.

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The temples have played a predominant role in the socio-religious life of the people. The temples were closely associated with the institution of caste system[6]. The caste system in the early period did not allow the Nadars into the temples, because they were treated as lower caste. The Nadars of Kamudi area sought temple entry on the grounds that they were Kshatriyas. But the Raja of Ramnad and the Maravars opposed th claim[7]. In November 1885, the Nadars of Kamudi sought permission to conduct a ritual feast in the Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple at Kamudi – the temple under Baskara Sethhupathi. They were given permission on condition that it should be conducted so as not to contravene the custom prohibiting the Nadars to enter into the temple. Vellasami Thevar, the grand-father of the late Muthuramalinga Thevar formed a combination to prevent the Nadars from exercising their rights. The combination ended only with the arrest and five year imprisonment of Vellasami Thevar[8]. This incident kindled the spirit of the Maravars against the Nadars.

In May 1897, a group of fifteen Nadars of the Irulappa Nadar family entered into the Meenakshi Sundreswarar temple at Kamudi and performed pooja to the chief deity. It was opposed by the Maravars and the Ramnad Zamindar. M. Baskara Sethuapthi filed a suit against fifteen members of the Irulappa Nadar family stating that they had polluted the temple and demanded the payment of Rs.2500/- towards ritual purification[9].

On July 20, 1899, the court ruled that neither the defendants nor any member of their community were entitled to enter into any part of the temple. The defendants were ordered to pay the sum of five hundred rupees for the necessary purification ceremonies in the temple[10]. To avoid any clash between Maravas and Nadars, an additional police force was stationed at Kamudi at the cost of the inhabitants for a period of five years from November 5, 1900[11].

Disappointed at the verdict of the district court at Madurai, the Nadars appealed to the High court at Madras. In 1901 before the commencement of hearing of the appeal, the Nadars under the leadership of Retnaswamy Nadar, a leading **abkari** contractor of Tanjore, tried to reach a compromise with the Raja of Ramnad. The appellants were represented by Krishnaswamy Iyer, Sundra Iyer and Satya Nadar. V. Bashyam, the advocate of the Raja learnt that the Raja entered into a written compromise signed by the Raja and Satya Nadar and that it was presented to the High court on May 2, 1901. The emissary of the Raja was for some time carrying on negotiations with the Nadars and raised subscriptions from them during the absence of the Raja at Ceylon. Nearly 7,000 rupees

were collected for the purpose of paying to the Raja for admitting the Nadars to the temple for worship. The Raja's agent accompanied by certain Nadars, and on payment of Rs.5,000 in cash, obtained the signature of the Raja for the compromise[12]. But the Raja was misguided by the English and soon Advocate Sankaran Nair gave notice to Satya Nadar withdrawing the compromise[13].

Dissatisfied with the decree of the subordinate judge of Madurai and with the fund of Rs.42,000 collected from members of community, the Nadars appealed to the High Court of judicature at Madras. The decision went against the Nadars and they then carried their case to the Privy Council in London[14]. The Privy Council affirmed the decree of the High Court in 1908. The Nadars expected a favourable verdict from the European officials, but in vain[15]. This case worsened further the relation between the Nadars and the Maravars, increased the tension and finally culminated in a conflict in August 1918 at Kamudi[16].

During this period of struggle, every Nadar whether Hindu or Christian took one side and every non-Nadar Hindu took the other side. Even the Muhammadans in Kamudi were not neutral[17]. In spite of the precautionary measures and also the court procedures, the situation continued to be tense. In anticipation of the revival of the hostilities, the Muhammadans of Kamudi appealed to the authority to prevent the procession of the Nadars through their street[18].

In August 1918 once again trouble started between the two communities in the weekly market, when a Maravar merchant squatted upon a stall belonging to the Nadars. Though further clashes were averted, the Maravars led by Ukkrapandian Thevar, the son of Vellasami Thevar, wanted more definite action[19]. As clash was apprehended, the government brought a detachment of police and the commander of Sivakasi special force on Septmber 16th. On the very next day, a large group of Maravars gathered on the south-east of Kamudi. They threatened the reserve police stationed at Kamudi and forced them to be keep immobilised. Then they commenced the plunder and riot. Five of the Sivakasi Special Forces were assaulted by the rioters. Another small party of Sivakasi special force rushed to the scene and warned them that they would be shot down. It made them retreat soon from that place.

In the afternoon of September 10, 1918, two of the constables from Kamudi who went to Aruppukkottai, reported that they saw the village Munsiff and Mettu peon sitting in the Tana, looking at the crowds of men and women

running away to their houses with the plunder on their heads[20]. The District Magistrate of Ramnad and Inspector General of Police appealed to the government for sending an additional police force to Kamudi to restore peace and order. The government posted an additional police force at Kamudi in October 1918[21]. About fifty villages in and around Kamudi were notified as the area of disturbance and the inhabitants of these places particularly the Nadars and Maravars were asked to pay the punitive tax upto March 31, 1920[22].

The seventh conference of Nadar Mahajana Sangam held at Sattur in June 1921 passed a resolution demanding the removal of punitive tax. On January 21, 1922 W.P.A. Soundara Pandian, MLA moved a resolution in the Legislative Council to repeal the Government order for collecting punitive tax[23]. In the council debates, he regretted the sufferings of the people due to the continued imposition of tax for three years. He gave the assurance that there would be no longer any conflict between the two communities[24].

W.P.A. Soundara Pandian thanked the efforts of the Nadar Mahajana Sabha and Maravar Association for their attempt at establishing a friendly understanding between the Nadars and Maravars. He pointed out that the maintenance of order was the primary duty of the Government. The cost of maintaining the special force at Kamudi should be met from the general revenue. The Raja of Ramnad, MLA insisted the same issue. Lionel Davidson, the Home Minister promised consideration of the issue. Then the motion was carried with a vast majority[25]. On March 22, 1922 W.P.A. Soundara Pandian put forth another resolution to scrap the grant of Rs.20,344, for the punitive police at Kamudi. His resolution was put to vote and passed.

Owing to the efforts of W.P.A. Soundara Pandian and the Raja of Ramnad, communal harmony between the Nadars and the Maravas was established and the punitive tax removed. To demonstrate their sincerity, the Nadar Mahajana Sangam invited Raja Rajeswara Muthuramalinga Sethupathi, the Raja of Ramnad to preside over its annual conference held at Sivakasi on June 28, 1922[26].

Thereafter, Muthuramalinga Thevar, the grand son of, Vellasamy Thevar devoted much attention to the Temple Entry issue. He condemned the rights and privileges enjoyed by a specific sect of people performing rituals and ceremonies.

The TamilNadu Harijan Seva Sangh's annual meeting was held at Madurai during March 7, 1938. It was decided to have a Harijan Temple Entry

Conference and it was also decided to send a group of volunteers to Kerala to deal with Harijan Welfare activities there. In that committee, Muthuramalinga Thevar was also a member[27]. This revealed the broadminded attitude of Thevar with regard to promoting activities of social justice. When a strong opposition raised against the entry of untouchables in the Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple on July 8, 1939, Mathuramalinga Thevar played an important role to make it a success[28].

The Kamudi Temple Entry attempt resulted in , the hostilities between Nadars and Maravas and it became the root cause for communal riots. The end of the riots smoothened the affairs and favoured the cause of temple entry for the depressed classes.

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Temple Entry Agitations In The Late 19th Century

Dr. A. Singaravel*

Introduction

Temple entry by the non-Brahmins especially by the depressed classes of Tamil Nadu formed an important stage in the social reform movement in modern period. Generally entry in to temples considered places of worship and equality detemined the status of the individual or a society. But certain sections of the Hindu society like the Nadars, the chettiars of some kulum section and the other depressed people were not permitted to enter temples to worship gods and goddesses. The Nadars who made an early attempt for temple entry in the 19th century, did not succeed. They started again their agitations in the southern parts of Tamil Nadu where they were numerically strong. However, the temple entry movement was vigorous only in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. The other districts of Tamil Nadu had not experienced as much as the southern districts.

Genesis of Social Disabilities

In Tamil Nadu many of the significant temples were consecrated to the Brahminical deities. During 18th and 19th centuries, these were open only to the upper castes-Hindus. The non caste-Hindus could not enter the temples located particularly in Thanjavur, Madurai, Srirangam, Erode, Aruppukkottai, Kamudi, Kalugumalai, Srivilliputtur, Sivakasi, Tirunelveli and Tiruchendoor for worship. Though these people were treated as members of the Hindu society and allowed to follow the same Hindu tenets, and worshipped the same gods, they were not even admitted into areas near the temples. In the event of accidental worship, it was considered pollution and the idols were required to undergo purification involving various ceremonies so as to remove the pollution. They were not even permitted to use the tanks and wells of the high caste-Hindus. These discriminatory conditions prevailing within the Hindu society paved way for many instances of social protest among the people.

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Nature of Disabilities

Generally, the priests, mostly Brahmins alone were permitted to enter the inner shrine or the garbhagraha of the temple. The people next to the Brahmins were allowed up to the steps in front of the garbhagraha for devotional acts like reciting Vedas, Mantra and prostrating in front of the idols. The Vaisyas were allowed to go as far as the steps of pradakshnavazhi outside the nalampalam, but not nearer. According to the prevailing traditional practices, the Vaisyas and some sections of the Sudras were allowed to worship the deities from the bhadramantapam and the other castes perhaps from the entrance of the tower and the Chandalas and parayas were kept outside the tower. It also stated that the depressed people should not enter the prakaras when the deity was taken out in procession during the utsava or festivals time. Thus the people connected with unclean professions were subjected to severe social disabilities. But their offerings or helps in all forms were accepted by the temple priests, i.e., little offerings of fruits, flowers and coconuts etc., were offered to temple priests for economic gains.

The social right of the caste-Hindus, their strong economic position and influence, and their dominant political proximity to the ruler or chieftain were also the causes for denial of the rights to suppressed people to enjoy their social rights. In the long run, they had to accept the predominance of the social practices of the caste-Hindus and showed obedience to the customs and evil practices laid down by the latter. The depressed people were scared to violate the long-established systems[1].

During the British period, the Christian missionaries and their educational institutions tried to expose the social injustice based on the caste restrictions. The spread of western education, improved means of communication facilities, the formation of caste associations etc., inspired the depressed people to demand their due place in Hindu society. Some of the non-caste Hindu communities like Nadars amassed immense wealth through business and commercial activities and due to their sound financial status and elevated positions demanded equality on par with the high caste-Hindus.

Disabilities of Legislation

Generally, the temple is the center of all civil and social life. Every village and town grew around the temple, which was the hub of all activities. Denial of opportunity created a space for agitations and confrontation. The

question of worship in the temple was first taken up as a challenge in their agitation. The Nadars were the first who fought to secure the freedom of worship and due share in the administration of all the Hindu temples. They first started their agitations at Aruppukkottai, a village located in the Ramnad District. Out of the 20,000 people of all castes, 4,000 Nadars took part in the agitation and demanded that they should be allowed to conduct procession in palanquins during marriage and festival occasions. The district magistrate of Madurai also granted the request of the Nadars[2].

This provoked the caste-Hindus, who unleashed violence against this judgment with the full support of nearly ten thousand people. On September 1860, some of the Nadars came to Madurai and conveyed to the district magistrate about the anticipated disturbances during the marriage procession and informed persons involved on the opposite side. The police were sent to Aruppukkottai for restoring law and order but the higher castes people who were in the administration refused to implement the decision. Instead the higher caste people destroyed the gardens and wells of the Nadars surrounding the town on 10th September. The police did not enquire and report the incident to the magistrate. They went to the town only after September 12th. It was found that the houses of Nadars were destroyed; property worth about Rs.30, 000 was looted and all shops were plundered. The Nadars were overpowered and could not resist[3]. It was a calculated attempt to prevent the Nadras to get their basic social rights. Thus the social disabilities of the Nadars during the ninetieth century were reinforced and their endeavours to remove the taboos were defeated which depicts the fact that the caste-Hindus were dominant and wanted others to be at subordinate level.

But this set back to the Nadars did not deter similar movements to enter the temples during the last decades of the ninetieth century in different parts of Tamil Nadu, when the caste-Hindus did not alter or change their customs. To overcome this problem, initially, the wealthy backward and depressed class members built separate temples for their castes people. Thus they asserted their right to perform temple ceremonies. Similarly, when the depressed people were refused priestly class services in the temples, they appointed their own people to perform priestly services in their temples.

To attain their spiritual status on par with high caste people, the Nadars attempted to enter the Lord Subramanya temple at Tiruchendur in the erstwhile Tirunelveli district in the year 1872. But the Brahmins and the Vellalas of Tiruchendur prevented their entry, which led to the confrontation, and a case

was filed against seven Nadars[4]. Thereafter, in 1874, some of the Nadars of Madurai were determined to enter the Meenakshi temple. In Madurai one Mooka Nadar defying age old customs and taboos entered the temple and had a glimpse of goddess Meenakshi. Then temple servants identified him as a Nadar and illtreated him to death. When the Nadars filed a criminal case, the judge refused to approve of their claim for temple entry. In 1876 the Nadars of Tiruthangal in Srivilliputtur were served with an order which prohibited the Nadars entry into the temple and offering presents to the deity. The order did not prevent the Nadars to take their own procession around the village streets. The right of procession was denied sometimes, based on the tense situation. In 1885 some Nadars of Gollapatti village in the Sattur taluk appealed for the right ot take out a street procession. The local caste-Hindu Zamindar and the higher caste leaders in the village resolved that the procession was to go on only through the street of the Nadar settlements of the village. Again in 1890, the Nadars in Madurai and Tiruchi tried to enter the temples but were fined by the district court for breaking the custom.

The Nadars conducted processions of the deities streets of Kalugumalai in 1895 against the wishes of Zamindar of Ettayapuram, a trustee of the Kalugumalai temple. The caste-Hindus did not allow procession in the car street and put up a pandal in the street, which led to confrontation between Nadars and caste-Hindus. As a result, the Brahmin manager of the Ettayapuram Zamindar was stabbed to death and seven Nadars were also killed. To bring the situation into normalcy, additional police force was posted at Kalugumalai until March 1899[5].

Caste Conflict at Sivakasi and Kamudi

The success of the Nadars at Kalugumalai led to several open confrontations in different parts of the Tirunelveli and Madurai districts. The Nadars of Sivakasi began to adopt brahminical habit of wearing dress, tuft, sacred thread and vegetarian food habits. These were some of the techniques described in sociological terms by Prof.M.N.Srinivas as the process of sanskritization done to acquire higher status to gain entry inside temple.

However, the vellalas of Sivakasi did not tolerate the Nadars even wearing footwear. They along with the Maravas turned against the Nadars. Amidst this situation in 1895, the Nadars requested permission to enter the temple. They also demanded participation in the management of the temple. But the Devasthanam committee declined to appoint a Nadar as temple trustee.

As a result, in 1898,the Nadars of Sivakasi forcibly entered the Viswanathaswamy temple in the city, which led to caste conflict and death of four Maravas. "On June 6, 1899, the entire non-Nadars of six thousand people joined together and marched to sivakasi and murdered twenty-five Nadars, destroyed several houses and caused immense loss to their wealth. Out of the 1958 persons arrested, 552 were convicted and seven were sentenced to death. Thus, here also the Nadars failed in their attempt to gain the right to enter the temple[7].

Another important step in the temple entry was at Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple at Kamudi. The Nadars of Ramnad district made another attempt to establish their right to enter and worship. Bhaskara Setupathi, the Rajah of Ramnad was the traditional trustee of this temple. The Nadars of Ramnad district made another attempt to establish their right to enter and worship. In November 1885, the Nadars of Kamudi appealed to the Rajah to give permission to conduct a ritual feast in the temple. M.R.R.Sivaramiah, the Devastanam Superintendent allowed the Nadars to send their offering through some persons of the higher castes, which was not liked by the Nadars. Hence, they broke the existing customs and forcibly went up to the sanctum sanctorum on 11th May 1897 and offered coconuts to the idols. Following this, a criminal case was filed against fifteen Nadars for entering the temple but they were acquitted by the sub-magistrate of Mudhukulatur on the grounds that the custom of the exclusion of Nadars from that temple was not proved and that it was not clear that the Nadars entered the temple and had gone near the idol. The Rajah of Ramnad filed a civil suit against this judgment to ban Nadars from entering that temple.

Both the parties went to the district civil, court for appeal at Madurai. The Rajah of Ramnad demanded permanent prohibition of the Nadars entry into the Siva temple. He also sought an amount of two hundred and fifty rupees for the ritual purification of the temple. On the other hand, the Nadars claimed their right to temple entry from time immemorial. In support of their claim, many people from Thanjavur, Coimbatore, Chidambaram, Trichinopoly and South Arcot submitted documents giving evidence about the entry and worship of the Siva temples[8].

However on 20th July 1899, the Sub-judge of Madurai East issued a perpetual injunction restraining the Nadras from entering Kamudi temple. The court contended "the hereditary occupation of the Shanars is proved, by census records and contemporary writers beginning from the early years of this century, to the cultivation of the palmyra tree and the coconut palm and the extrac

tion and manufacture of their juice. The local usage also supports the statement that Shanar community hereditarily followed the occupation of the manufacture of the palmyra toddy. The rules of temple prohibit the entrance of persons engaged in that occupation within its walls. "I also find and belong to a class which, under custom and shastras, are precluded from entering the plaint temple which is governed by the ritual prescribed in the Siva Agamas adopted as authoritative and current in the Madura district"[9].

After the judgment of the district court of Madurai, the Nadras appealed to the High Court of Madras on 2nd May 1901[11]. Before the commencement of hearing of the appeal, the Nadars under the leadership of Rathanaswami Nadar of Thanjavur attempted for a compromise with the Rajah of Ramnad and succeeded. As per the compromise, the Nadars agreed to pay certain amount to the Rajah for admitting the Nadars to enter and worship at Kamudi temple.

But the compromise was not appreciated by the British officials and the magistrate of Madurai district, who informed the Rajah of Ramnad that if the Nadras succeeded in the High court, they could have attained the privilege of entering the Siva temple at Tirunelveli and Madurai. Hence the Rajah of Ramnad understood the serious nature of the problem and wired to Madras to prevent a decree from being passed in accordance with their compromise. When the compromise was withdrawn, the case was referred to the High court which accepted the verdict of the sub-judge of Madurai and the ruling went against the Nadars. Benson and J.J. More, the judges of the High Court, ruled that "the inference to which the shastras would lead is that Shanars are prohibited owing to their hereditary caste occupation from entering into the Saivite temple. But no doubt many of the Shanars have abandoned the hereditary occupation and have won for themselves by education, industry and frugality, respectable positions as traders and merchants and even as vakils and clerks and it is natural to feel sympathy for their efforts to obtain social recognition and rise to what is regarded as a higher form of religious worship but such sympathy will not be increased by unreasonable and unfounded pretensions. In the effort to rise, the Shanars must not invade the established rights of other castes. They have temples of their own and are numerous enough and strong in wealth and education to rise along their own lines and without appropriating the institutions or infringing the rights of the others and in so doing they will have the sympathy of all right minded men, if necessary, the protection of the courts"[13].

Privy Council's Verdict and Period of Lull

When justice was denied at High court, they collected a sum of Rs. 4,200/- and appealed to the Privy Council in London, for social justice and equality on par with caste-Hindus. In the year 1908, the Privy Council also affirmed the decisions of the lower courts and stated that "there is no sort of proof that even suggests a probability that the Shanars are descendants from Kshatriya or warrior caste of Hindus, or the successors of the Pandya, Chola or Chera race of Kings. There are no grounds whatever for regarding them as of Aryan origin. Their position in general social estimation appeared to be just above that of the Pallars and Pariyas, who are on all hands regarded as unclean and prohibited from the use of the Hindu temples and below that of the Vellalas, Maravas and other cultivating castes usually classed as Sudras and admitted free to worship in the Hindu temple" Commenting on the Kamudi temple entry dispute, P.Chidambaram Pillai considered it as a mere legacy left out of the old right and left hand factions[14].

Though the Nadars otherwise known as Shanars had sound economic resources and skilled man power, they could not root out the old and highly conservative practices of the society. The courts set up for maintaining social harmony and equal treatment on the basis of the law of land could not do justice because the law was interpreted on the basis of social practices and caste distinction.

On receipt of the verdict from the highest court of appeal, instead of continuing the struggle, they constructed new massive temples in the brahminical style and tried to confine themselves within the precincts of their respective temples for a short period. It brought a period of lull in the temple entry movement in Tamil Nadu. Afterwards when the Justice Party and the Self-Respect Movement advocated removal of social disabilities and the restoration of social justice, the Nadars joined in large numbers and continued the struggle with added vigour[15].

Conclusion

The religion that keeps them excluded from Agamic temples, however, created a space for constructing a temple of their own to uplift their status in society. Such attitudes are not strange in Tamil Nadu context. For instance, the depressed class have a fascination for styling themselves as Devendra Kula Vellalas. Further, the matrix of social life has resulted in a social syndrome- a

big man is a rich man, a small man is a poor man. The high caste is a good caste and the low caste is a bad caste. Besides, the social distance between different castes prevented the emergence of the exploited against their exploiters. Hence social distress found expression through ritual events like temple entry.

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Case Studies Of Srivillipathar Temple Entry

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The word Temple comes from the Latin term "templum", open or consecrated space. It is exactly a place were God, the supreme spirit, dwells. The aim of this paper is to highlight the Srivilliputhur Temple Entry[1]. The temple is acceptable where Gods appear in various forms by their worshippers.[2] Temple means a place is a place of public religious worship and includes subsidiary shrines and mandapams attached to such place. [3] The ancient Tamils were God fearing people and never settled in villages which had no temple and considered such villages as haunted places. Live not in a village which is devoid of a temple was their dictum. It is extremely good to worship in temples. It indicates that temple worship is a very ancient form of worship in Tamilnadu. The words ii and Perumpadai occurring in Tolkappiam indicate that they are the first steps to temple building[4]

The traditional Tamil society has been divided upon the caste and religious considerations. It led to the birth of many customs conventions and practices. Temple entry by people belonging to the lower strata of society formed an important phase in social reform movement in Tamilnadu. Temples were constructed for the purpose of worship thereby facilitating social integration and the spiritual development of the people. But certain sections in the Hindu society such as the Nadars, the Komutti Chettis and the untouchables were not allowed to enter the temples to worship gods and goddesses. The Mysore region was precursor in allowing entry to the depressed class people as early as twelfth century in the temples of Krishna at Melukote in Mandya district thanks to the efforts to saint Ramanujua.[11]

The Socio Religious Reform Movement at national and regional levels moulded social consciousness and emancipation of the oppressed people. The temple entry was considered as the attainment of the highest social right of the oppressed people. Of these communities the Nadars played a significant role in the temple entry movement in the second half of the ninteenth century A.D.

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In the hoary past Nadars were involved in the tapping of the Palmyras and consumed toddy, which was considered a **panchamapathaka** and therefore during the times of Nayak they were denied entry into the temple. In Tamil nadu the Nadars were the first people to fight for the cause of temple entry. In order to attain the temple entry riot, they agitated in the temples at Thanjavur, Aruppukkottai (1860), Thiruchendur (1872), Madurai (1874) Thiruthangal (1876 – 1878), Gollapatti (1885) Madurai (1890), Kalugumalai (1895), Kamuthi (1897), Sivakasi (1898) and Srivilliputhur (1899)

On July 17, 1898 Nadars attempted to enter the Viswantha Swami Temple of Sivakasi. The temples were closed to prevent the Nadars from entering it. But the Nadars brokne the doors during night and had darshan. In the conflict that ensued four Maravas were put to death. Nine Nadars were prosecuted.[5] The Deputy Magistrate dismissed the case as laise.[6] But the opponents of Nadars felt that authorities were partial towards the Nadars in deciding the case. On April 1876 serious rioting broke out in Sivakasi.[7]

Not only the Maravas of Sivakasi were leading and antinadar campaigns but also the other upper castes conducted the same in other parts especially around Srivilliputhur. The first attack was made on village called Pauttakulam, five miles away from Srivilliputhur on May 23 1899.[8] The Nadars of the village were driven out and they wandered in the streets of Sivakasi like mendicants having lost all their property. The fourth attack was made on May 31,1899 on Lampatti another village in the Srivilliputhur taluk. A telegram was sent to Raghava Iyer, the deputy Magistrate of Srivilliputhur.[9] The fifth attack was made on June 1,1899 on Kunur a village in the Srivilliputhur taluk and the whole village was looted. Reports were sent to the authorities. [10]

On July 1899 an attack was made on Karisalkulam, a village in the Srivilliputhur taluk, which was made in broad daylight. In the clash that ensured six persons were killed.[11] Thereafter, the Nadars decided to build new massive temples in the brahminical style and waited for awakening from the other sections of the depressed people and a lead from the social-minded leaders.[12]

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Travancore and Malabar Temple Entry Legislations : Impact on Madarai Temple Entry

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Dr. L. Selvamuthu Kumarasami**

Based on the Varna system, generally the Hindu society was divided into four classes viz: the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vysyas and the Sudras,[1] or the outcastes. They were known by various names as untouchables, unapproachables and so on.[2] They were not permitted to enter the Hindu temples and worship the gods. In some places, they were not even permitted to walk near the temples. These social ills were abolished by proclamations and legislations through the initiatives of social reformers and political leaders like Periyar E.V. Ramasamy, M.K. Gandhi, B.R. Ambedkar, Sri Narayana Guru, Ayyankali and so on. Guruvaryur Satyagraha and Malabar and Travancore Temple Entry proclamations formed the stepping stone and forerunner for Madras Temple Entry Authorisation Legislation. The Congress Ministry during 1937-1939 passed innumerable legislations. Among them, the temple entry legislations were historically important.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the social reformers felt strongly about temple entry movement being of primary importance in the agitation against eradication of untouchability. Tamil Nadu which stood last in the line got inspiration from the neighboring Southern states of Travancore and Malabar. The erstwhile Princely Travancore State moved to introduce religious reform in the form of allowing untouchables into its temples. The Ezhava leaders questioned the efficacy of Hinduism when their people were discriminated in many ways by the Caste-Hindus. In December 1917, C.V. Kunjuraman, a famous Malayalam journalist through an editorial in <u>Mitavadi</u>, demanded the necessity of temple entry. In the same strain, the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (S.N.D.P.) Yogam, the social organization of the Ezhavas, threatened to embrace other religions, if the people were not liberated from the desperate socio-civic deprivations. In 1918 the Ezhavas appealed to the Travancore Government to open the State temples to untouchables. Activated by the fillip given by Nair leaders like Kannathu Janardhana Menon and Raman Thambi, T.K.Madhavan entered an

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agitation in 1919 for equality of citizenship and sought abolition of all kinds of ritual and civic disabilities. In the same year, as a member of Sree Moolam popular assembly, T.K. Madhavan urged upon the Travancore Government to allow the untouchables the temples. In an article in the Deshabhimani, he further stressed the right of temple entry of untouchables. The entry of M.K.Gandhi into Congress in 1919,boosted the morale of T.K. Madhavan in his constant struggle. In 1920 as a Secretary of Public Service Bureau, T.K. Madhavan made the temple entry issue as part of equality of citizenship movement in Travancore. Again in 1921 in the State Assembly, he moved the issue but could not gain expected result at once. In the same year, he met Gandhi at Tirunelveli on the latter's arrival there. Meeting with M.K. Gandhi, T.K. Madhavan convinced the latter about the idea of temple entry as an essential part of removal of untouchability. Even Gandhi admired and blessed the success of temple entry movement in Travancore. The message of M.K.Gandhi had an electrifying impact upon the public opinion in Travancore and the progressive sections of the caste-Hindus began to support temple entry openly. However, T.K.Madhavan felt that the demand could not be realised without the active support of the Indian National Congress.

It is due to the discrimination policy of untouchability that the 'untouchables' were not even allowed to enter Sree Padmanabaswami temple of Tirvandrum. Therefore the untouchables looked for other religions which were ready to provide social justice and equality. S.N.D.P. and M.K.Gandhi also demanded entry in to the temple. Activated by mass conversion threat, Maharani Sri Chitra Tirunal(1931-1948) eventually issued a proclamation on 24th May 1939, by which the roads, tanks, wells and schools of Travancore State were opened to all classes, irrespective of caste, as a preliminary step to temple entry.[3] In the light of the circumstances forced and inspired by Queen Mother Sethu Lakshmi Bai and guided by Dewan C.P. Ramasamy Iyer, who hailed from Madras State, this young Maharaja on his twenty-fourth birth day issued Temple Entry Proclamation on12th November 1936.[4] It observed that none of Hindu subjects by reason of birth be denied getting consolation and solace by entering or worshipping in the temples controlled by Travancore Government.[5] Soon some 1600 temples were opened to Harijans, of which, 155 were major temples, including twelve widely-famed shrines of all India importance like those of Vaikom, Varkala, Haripad, Neyyattinkara, Kalady, Cape Comorin and Suchindrum.[6]

Indeed, The Travancore experiment formed the first of its kind in India.[7] M.K. Gandhi called it the 'Miracle of modern times'.[8] In fact, following the steps of Travancore, other states of South India began to open temples. In Cochin, temples were opened and subsequently it paved the way for opening of temple at Guruvayur.[9] In Madras, all people including Brahmins and caste-Hindus like P.S. Sivaswami Iyer, Rajaji, R.Srinivasan and M.C.Rajah welcomed it and hoped for similar changes in Madras. The Madurai Municipal council appealed to the Madras Government to provide a similar proclamation for Madras State. The women's conference in Madras 28th November 1939 and the North Arcot Adi-Dravida Conference on 4th July 1937 passed resolutions demanding opening of temples in Tamil Nadu. In response to the popular demand, the Madras Legislature passed a resolution congratulating the Travancore Government and hoped for similar changes in the State.[10]

In order to witness temple entry under the leadership of A. Vaidyanatha Iyer, leaders like N.M.R.Subbaraman, L.N. Gopalsami, P.K. Ramachari, P.S. Krishnaswami Iyenger and about fifty Harijans went to Travancore State and they were allowed to enter the Padmanabhaswamy Temple.[11] Subsequently Rajaji also entered this temple along with forty untouchables.[12] The visit of Rajaji and A.Vaidyanatha Iyer to Travancore State influenced to a large extent the experiment in temple entry in Tamil Nadu. They determined to throw open the temples of Tamil Nadu to the Harijans without any restraint and held public meetings in many places advocating temple entry.[13] Ever since the Congress Ministry assumed power in Madras in 1937 with Rajaji as Premier, Congress leaders like A.Vaidyanatha Iyer urged for early legislation of M.C.Rajah's bill for permitting temple entry for Harijans.[14]

The opening of the temples in Travancore State made the neighbouring Malabar district Harijan Sevak Sangh (H.S.S.) to convene a meeting on18 July 1937, in which it was decided to hold protest meetings against Madras Government demanding a special legislation for Malabar.[15] The Malabar H.S.S. was pushed to such a level because worst form of untouchability along with unapproachability, unshadowability, unseeability and unthinkability were practiced in Malabar.[16] At this juncture Rajaji Ministry introduced the Malabar Temple Entry Bill in the Legislative Assembly on 1st December 1938.[17]

After certain modifications, the Committee submitted it to the Government on 5th December 1938.[18] At last the bill was again left for discussion in the Legislative Assembly on 8th December 1938.[19] Subsequently the bill was passed without any material change in the Assembly.[20] Ultimately, the Council

passed the bill into law as Malabar Temple Entry Act on 13th December 1938. Subsequently, this Act received the assent of the Governor on18th January 1939 and promulgated on 7th February 1939.[21] Nevertheless, the Malabar Temple Entry legislation had its echo in Tamil Nadu. In this connection, the Tamil Nadu Provincial Political Conference held at Rajapalayam on 31st december1938, passed a resolution which appealed to all temple trustees and managements in Tamil Nadu not to wait for similar legislations to be extended to their places but to open voluntarily, generously and gracefully all temples to the Harijans as early as possible.[22]

Exactly after six months of the Malabar Temple Entry Act, a hectic temple entry campaign began in Madras State with its beginning at Madurai. The Congressites appealed to the people to allow the depressed people into Madurai Meenakshi Sundareswar Temple.[23] For a while this idea of temple entry was well backed by A.Vaidyanatha Iyer, the President of the T.N.H.S.S. and N.M.R. Subbaraman, (Madurai Gandhi) and P.K. Ramachari, the president and secretary respectively of the Madurai district branch of H.S.s.[24] All these congress leaders, the inspiration given by Rajaji involved themselves in the vigorous campaign for temple entry. With However, it seemed very hard to attain it because Madurai almost remained a center of orthodoxy represented by leaders like N.Natesa Iyer as the president of All India Varnashrama Sangh, who opposed temple entry tooth and nail.

Rameswari Nehru, (a kinswoman of Nehru family), a national leader and Vice-President of All India Harijian Sevak Sangh came to Tamil Nadu on a Harijan propaganda tour. She wished to provide practical experimentation to the temple entry as part of Congress Constructive Programme. For according a fitting reception to the visiting leader, the Tamil Nadu Harijan Sevak Sangh (T.N.H.S.S.) organized a Provincial Temple Entry Conference at the Victoria Edward hall, Madurai on 13th June 1938.[26] Attended by over 20,000 people and 300 delegates of Madras State, this conference showed that the second city (Madurai) in the Province had come to the rescue of the Harijans and for the first time the Harijans got their birth right in religious reform.[27] This conference passed one solution in favour of temple entry. In the public meeting held at the evening in Madurai, Rajaji stated that in all national movements, Madurai played a leading role and expressed his hope that Madurai would do so in the temple entry campaign also. In order to get the acknowledgement of the people of Madurai, Rameswari Nehru asked the audience about their willingness to

allow Harijans to enter Madurai temple. In response, all of them in solemn voice gave their unstinted support to temple entry of Harijans. It was a pleasing spectacle of hands showing support for the proposal. Thus the Temple Entry Provincial Conference added extra momentum and resulted in the constitution of a Temple Entry Propaganda Committee in Madurai under the leadership of A.Vaidyanatha Iyer, and fixed Madurai as the suitable place for temple entry movement.

By the end of June, a public meeting for temple entry was attended by A.Vaidyanatha Iyer in Madurai. N.Halasyam of Tiruchirapalli addressed many public meetings to mitigate the feelings of orthodox members. In addition, a band of moderate leaders like Thiyagaraja Sivam, L.Krishna Bharathi, P.K.Ramachari, Mangala Pattabhiramayya and others illustrated the significance of temple entry reform. Above all, V.Muthuramalinga Thevar, a prominent leader of Madurai district also stoutly advocated temple entry.[28]

On the other side, Rameswari Nehru on her stay in Madurai met R.S.Naidu, the Executive Officer of Madurai Meenakshi Temple Devasthanam and asked him to allow the Harijans into the temple. Also the local Congress leaders and servants of Madurai H.S.S. pressed R.S. Naidu to throw open the temple. However, R.S. Naidu expressed his inability in the absence of any legislation permitting him to do so. Rajaji, the Premier reported to have told R.S.Naidu that those temple officials who were against temple entry would be dismissed and that the Government would order a special legislation if necessary to get an indemnity bill passed to protect the temple officials against whom any legal proceedings were started by the enemies of the reform, if and when the temple was opened to the Harijans,. He even thereafter persuaded A. Vaidyanatha Iyer to take steps to allow the Harijans into the temple and the programme of entry to be communicated to him before the end of June 1939. Further, Rajaji also reported to have said at Madurai: "If prevailing law resorted to for obstructing the temple entry, I would give you new legislation within eight days".[30]

All the meetings held in Madurai day in and day out, clearly showed that the public of Madurai welcomed the Harijans' entry into temples and there appeared an atmosphere when the Harijans were going to enter the Madurai temple within a particular date. In order to realize the dream, on 8th July 1939, devotees including the Harijans came in two cars before the temple of Madurai, laden with trays of flowers, coconuts, betel and camphor. They came with

smearing on holy ash on their bodies and without wearing shirts. AT 8.50 a.m. the blessings of Rajaji, with leaders like A. Vaidyanatha Iyer and L.N. Gopalsami went to Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple, taking with them five Harijans – Swami Muruganandam of Alampatti, P.Kakkan of Tumbapatti, who later on became a minister, Muthu, a Harijan Sevalaya Servant, V.S. Chinnayya of Madichiam and B.R. Poovalingam of Virattipattu besides S.S. Shanmuga Nadar, a prominent Municipal Councillor of Virudhunagar. Along with them Paramasivam alias Chidambaram Mudaliar, Thyagaraja Sivam, N.M.R. Subbaraman, Bharathamuthu Thevar and Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar participated in the temple entry.[31] R.S. Naidu, the first executive officer of the temple who was presumably informed before hand, was present to ensure that nothing untoward had happened on such an unprecedented occasion. Chidambaram Mudaliar, the Superintendent and other staff of Devasthanam including the archakas, the hereditary priests warmly welcomed the new visitors. They went to the side of golden lily tank inside the temple and finished their ablution there. Then, the devotees had at first darshaned the deities of Chithi Vinayagar and Lord Subramaniya.

After darshan of minor deities, these depressed members offered worship to the main deities from the arthamandapam, where even the non-Brahmin caste-Hindus were not allowed and which was reserved solely for the worship of Brahmins. The party recited Tevaram and Tiruvasagam (in Tamil holy hymns) in praise of the deities and their offer of archanai was received by Ponnuswami Bhattar, the temple priest who presented garlands and prasadams (sanctified offerings) to them. Indeed, a large concourse of people had collected at the time of worship without protest by any one. This event marked a stepping stone for the social movement of the depressed classes in search of equality of opportunity through entry of temples. It ushered In the breaking down of old custom and a new chapter in the annals of Hinduism.[32]

On 17th July 1939, the Madras Government passed the Temple Entry Ordinance to protect the participants of Madurai Temple entry. The proclamation of the Ordinance indemnified the Executive Officers and other servants of the temples in the Madurai, Tanjore and Tirunelveli districts from all liability in respect of all acts associated with temple entry.[33] The proclamation of the ordinance by the Madras Government was severely criticized by several sections of the sanatanist legislators.[34] The sanatanists headed by N. Natesa Iyer and K.R. Venkatrama Iyer threatened to show black flag demonstration to Rajaji on his arrival in Madurai on 30th July 1939.[35] Rajaji courageously went near the meeting of sanatanists which was held at the Vaigai river bed. He also

attended a meeting at Tilak Square in Madurai where he openly explained the necessity of temple entry ordinance. Their attendance at the meeting, clearly showed that in Madurai more than 75,000 people were against the opinion of sanatanists and were in favour of temple entry.[36]

After mobilizing public opinion in support of his ordinance, as a next step Rajaji introduced the Madras Temple Entry Indemnity Bill on 3rd August 1939 in the Madras Legislative Assembly.[37] It sought to authorize the trustees or other authorities in charge of temples to allow the temple entry of excluded classes and indemnity those persons from undergoing any civil or criminal penalty for their deed in connection with the entry and worship of excluded classes. The Bill also aimed at protecting all the temple servants of Madurai Meenakshiamman Temple who were accused of failure of duty on 8th July 1939 in connection with the entry and offer of worship there by the excluded classes violating the custom and usage[31]. As T.T.Krishnamachari and a few sanatanist legislators did not oppose except the bill, the Assembly passed it amidst applause and cheering without dissenting voice on 4th August 1939.

After passing in the Assembly, it was taken up again for the consideration of Legislative Council on 7th August 1939. After the deliberations of views, the legislative Council passed the bill on 8th August and Governor Erskine gave assent to it on12 august 1939. Lord Linlithgow, the Governor-General ratified it on 4th September 1939.[39] The Congress Working Committee in its session held at Wardha and Bombay on 12th August and 26 October 1939 respectively congratulated the Madras Government for enacting the temple entry bill and hoped that the noble example of Madurai would be followed by the trustees and worshippers of other temples.[40]

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Challenges Of Temple Entry And The Depressed Class People

Capt. Dr. S. Kaliaperumal*

Introduction

Of the social maladies afflicting and weakening modern Indian society, untouchability seems to be ramapant in the Indian villages even after 58 years of Independence. Untouchability continues different forms. One such malady persisting still is the "Temple Entry Challenge" to the depressed class people. To them, Independence means nothing except that they cast their votes as and when elections are held, that they enjoy reservation of seats in educational institutions and legislatures and that their children get some posts after due qualifications. But as Dr. Ambedkar, the union law minister, while piloting the constitution in 1950, put it, untouchability continues to divide us

> "India today enters into a world of contradiction;
> We are politically equal, but remain socially inequal"[1]

The Problem

India has always been a land of inequality and Tamil Nadu, especially after Aryanisation. A section of the Tamils have continually been placed unfit for a normal living, particularly in society. They are treated as sub-human and considered unfit for entry into temples; walk along the streets of high castes, bathe in common tank, cremate in the common ghats and drink in a common tea shop. As caste pursues even after death, a decent burial to a dead man of the depressed class becomes difficult in parts of our country. Similarly, temple entry remains a national issue, though appears to be local (Tamil Nadu). The challenge persists even after the following curative measures taken by the government through legislations.

Pre-Independent Days

1. Disabilities Removal Act 1833. Madras
2. Temple entry Indemnity Act 1939. (enacted on 08.08.1939; approved by the Viceroy on 11.09.1939)

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Post-independent days

1. Article 15 and 16 of the constitution.
2. Article 17 – Abolition of Untouchability Act.
3. Article 25 – Temple entry right
4. Tamil Nadu Temple entry Authorization Act – 1947 (after Governor – General's assent on 11.05.1947, published first in the Fort St. George Gazette on 13.05.1947
5. SC/ST commission – Special Articles 330, 342 and 346.
6. Indian Federal Act – Section 164 Article 371, Schedule V and VI
7. Protection of Civil Rights Act – 1989.
8. Prevention of Atrocities Act – 1995.

The laws mentioned above invariably prescribe an imprisonment for a term of not less than one month and not more than six months to a person who prevents or obstructs any one from exercising such rights on the ground of disability (disqualification) arising out of untouchability.

The law (d) mentioned above clarifies, that,

> "Not withstanding any law, custom or usage to the contrary, every Hindu irrespective of the caste or sect to which he belongs shall be entitled to enter any Hindu temple and offer worship there in the same manner and to the same extent as Hindus in general".[2]

Despite these laws are inforce, there is a challenge. The sincere doubt, we rise, is that whether it is a challenge to the depressed class people or to the law. Actually it is a challenge to the constitution that provides this right and to the Judiciary, which guarantees it through judgments. It is a failure and an inability on the part of the government for it is not able to execute its own law. We can easily reason out the inability of the government, if we turn to the pages of Indian history.

Anatomy

During the British rule, the temples came under the control of the Boards of Revenue, which looked after the administration as per the guidance of local Hindu pundits. Accordingly the temples of Bengal, Madras, and Bombay came under Boards in 1810 AD, 1817 AD and 1827 AD respectively. This arrangement continued till 1841 and the temple cases of Thiruvallur and Thirupathy

effected a change and the temple administration was left in the hands of the Aryans and Aryanised non-brahmin high castes. [3]

The British government announced her divorce with Hindu religious matters in the wake of queen Victoria's proclamation in 1858. This made the Brahmins again the de-facto authorities of the temples, the de-jure being the non Aryan Tamils. The Hindu Temples and Endowment Act XX of 1863 was passed in which the **Hindu Agamic rules** were incorporated. The rigidity of these rules easily disqualified the non-Brahmins and non-Hindus from occupying posts and entering into temples. The Regulating Act enacted by warren Hastings in 1772 further strengthened the Brahmin's hold in Temples. Section 27 of the Act (Passed on 17th April 1780) says,

> "that in all suits regarding inheritance, marriage and caste and other religious usages or institutions, the laws of **Koran** with respect to Mohamedans and those of the **Sastras** with respect to Gentoos (Hindus) shall be invariably adhered to; On all such occasions, the **Moulavis** or **Brahmins** shall respectively attend to expound the law; and they sign the report and assist in passing the decrees". [4]

Henry Thomas Colebrooke translated excerpts from **Manusmiruthi, Parasarasmiruthi, Yaknjavalkiya smiruthi and Narada sumiruthi** which were published in 1797 under the title "A digest of Hindu law on contracts and successions".

Later in 1860 the Hindu Laws were codified and on this basis, High Courts were established in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. Administration of justice in these courts was according to the guidelines of the section 27 of the Regulating Act, 1772 and that of the Hindu law, 1860. The Privy Council in London, the apex court of appeal, depended for its judgements on the reports of the subordinate courts in India, especially in the cases of religious and social field. It was on this line, T. Muthusamy Iyer, (1832-1895) the first Indian Judge in the Madras High Court, gave a judgement in the temple cases as follows.

> "The establishment of Hindu temples and charity institutions are meant for the convenience and benefit of orthodox hindus; neither for Mohammedans nor for the untouchable out castes". [5]

The point, to be observed here, is that the British administrators took necessary care not to incur the displeasure of the Indian orthodoxy, especially

in matters of religion and society. Such impressions became unavoidable even in the Constitution of Independent India. A kind of protection to such customary laws has been provided in the rule 372 (1) of our Constitution. It says,

> "not withstanding the repeal by this constitution referred to in Article 395 but subject to the other provisions of this constitution, **all the laws in force in the territory of India immediately before the commencement of this constitution shall continue in force** there in until altered or repealed or amended by a competent legislature or other competent authority"[6].

As per this provision, the local customary laws continue to be in force and according to which the likelihood of challenging the temple entry is always there.

Though the social practice of untouchability has been declared a punishable crime under law, the Indian Constitution still admits the religious practice of untouchability through the other form of disability on the basis of four varnas (castes) with prescribed duties. The personal law, while classifying the Hindus into four castes, (viz the brahmins, the kshatriyas, the vaisyas and the sudras), it has not included a large mass of people called **Panchamas, Pamaras** and **Chandalas** with any one of the authorized varnas (castes) under Hinduism. These Castes were put in a Schedule and were simply called "Scheduled Castes and Tribes" for administrative convenience. The British historian Arnold J. Toynbee aptly narrates their position in Hindu society as follows:

"They (the depressed class people) are in the (Hindu) society, but not of the society". [7]

Manu, the prime Hindu lawgiver, while explicit in declaring the four castes of Hindus (Chatur Varnam); does not accept a fifth caste (Panchamas). Sastras and smiruthis declare the avarnas as outcastes and non-hindus. [8] It was on the basis of the above facts, there hung in the temple gates till 1960, a board with words "Non-Hindus will not be admitted into temples".

Let us now see some of the earliest Temple entry agitations. **Panagudy** and **Kamuthi** incidents (1895-1921) may be mentioned here. Both resulted in much bloodshed, loss of life, mass killings and arsons. The Kamuthi temple entry case between Rajeswaradurai, (the Zamindar and a Maravar of Ramnad) and Sankaralingam (a nadar) was the outcome of the **Valankai – Idnankai** caste prejudices. More than 2000 people on both sides were massacred and many

villages were consigned to fire. The bone of contention in this case was, whether the **Nadars** and **Shanars** could enter into Sivan temple at Madurai.[9] On the basis of customary laws, the judgements in all courts were unfavourable to the Nadars and Shanars. The customary law punished one **Murugesan** (Adi-Dravida) of **Madras** in March 1926, for his entry into temple, breaking the ban.[10]

Kottai Eswaran Temple entry case in **Erode** was another incident in 1929. Periyar E.V. Ramasamy, the then President of the Temple Devasthanam Committee, brought about a resolution, permitting the scheduled caste people to enter and worship in the Eswaran temple. Accordingly Kuthusi Gurusamy along with three other Adidravida friends, Eswaran, Pasupathy and Karuppan, entered the temple for worship on April 4,1929. The alarmed priests and other Brahmins locked the doors outside and thus the entrants were held up for two days inside. In the absence of Periyar, the Devasthanam Committee took the matter with the police who booked cases against the three Adi-dravidars under Indian Penal Code section 109, 154, 295 and 297. Periyar resigned his post as President of the Devasthanam Committee as it went against its resolution. The punishment to the entrants issued by the subordinate court was revoked by the high court.[11]

K.A.P. Viswanatham of Trichy with a band of his friends organized temple entry agitations at **Trichy, Madurai, Madras** and **Sucindram.** Emperumal (Naidu) and other agitators conducted the sucindrum temple entry in 1929 and 1930 and were arrested.[12]

Outside Tamil Nadu, two important temple entry movements attracted the entire India. One at **Vaikom** (Kerala in 1924) by Periyar E.V. Ramasamy and another at **Nasik** (Maharastra in 1933) by B.R. Ambedkar. Both kindled the spirit of self-respect of the millions of downtrodden mass and served as an eye opener. The "Commual Award" by Ramsay Mc Donald, the then Prime Minister of England, in 1932 soon after the Round Table Conferences, was another important incident to be noted here. In all India level, the Depressed Class Temple Entry Day was also observed and paved the way for the enactment of Temple Entry Authorization Act in 1947. Subsequently, political and social leaders took the depressed class people into the temples. In this connection, the services of Vaithiyanatha Iyer, Rajaji and T.S.S. Rajan can be remembered. The passing of the Abolition of Untouchability Act was also conducive to the situation at the time.

But the problem did not end there. These temple entries appeared to be a kind of political exercise done in a festive mood in the wake of the enactments in favour of untouchables. But the challenges for their entry into temples on the basis of religion, continued as fire in the ash. The Hindu orthodoxy and conservatives did not seem to agree with these happenings. The absence of organized temple entry agitations now make the scene appear very calm; the challenge for the temple entry is common in the remote villages. Either the people do not make it an issue or the media do not cover them.

In North India, raping or stripping dalit women naked, beating or torturing of dalit youths for their entry into temples, are not uncommon; in the south they are in mild forms. To quote a few recent incidents, let us first take the case of **Kandadevi** Sornamuktheewarar temple (Sivagangai district in Tamil Nadu) where the challenge is open since 1996. Despite constitutional safeguards and a favourable court verdict, the depressed class people are denied the right to worship the god and drag temple car. It shows the government's wilfull negligence or its inability. The existence of an independent Judiciary is supposed to be the symbol of democracy. When the court Judgments are disobeyed by the government and challenged by a section of people, what can be the other alternative for the victims.

An agitation to enter into the sanctum of the **Kanchi-Kamatchiamman Temple** was staged on December 19, 2003. This demand by Dravidar Kazhagam was just and right according to the constitutional provisions. The comment made on that occasion by the head of the mutt was strange and meaningless. It said,

"The temple doors are open to Adi-dravidar but will be shut to a Dalit who claims it as a right"[13].

Sankarachrya should have meant an Adi-dravida to be a pious, godfearing, polite and innocent slave who would be even prepared for worship outside the temple gates. The Head of the mutt should have understood that a Dalit is a militant whose knowledge about his temple entry right is irresistible. The point is that there should be no challenge to a person for his entry into the temple according to law-let him be an Adidravida or a Dalit. Neither the police, nor the government nor the Judiciary took notice of this infringement of law.

A more recent incident of temple entry obstruction has taken place at **Kalapatty** Village at Coimbatore district on May 16, 2004. The dalits are

denied entry into the local Mariamman temple maintained by Hindu Religious and Charities Endowment Board. A state level fact finding team headed by Markandan, the former Vice-Chancellor of Gandhigram Rural University, under the aegis of People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) had visited the spot on May 24, 2004 and submitted the findings to the government.[14] The temple entry cases in many places have conveniently been twisted and branded as caste problems. There is always a complaint that the caste Hindu Police cause havoc and confuse the depressed class people, so that the F.I.R could be registered often under other sections of untouchability act or PCR act.

Diagnosis

Further, a diagnosis into the problem is desirable and acceptable. To understand the crux of the problem, the following questions are relevant.

1. Who challenges the temple entry?
2. To whom is it a challenge?
3. Is it justifiable?

Temple entry challenges are not new to Tamils and there had been three Phases. (1) Sanctum entry and priest service are denied to the **high caste non-Brahmins** till date. (2) Temple entry had been a challenge to the Sudra castes such as **Nadars, Shanars** and few others till 1947. (3) The challenge now continues to the depressed class people consisting of the **Paraiyas, Pallas** and other **tribes** (the fifth caste), that too in the temples served or owned either by Brahmins or non-Brahmin high castes. No such challenge exists in the temples of villages deities such as **Kadan, Madan, Veeran, Kathan, Karuppan, Pidari, Iyyanar, Selliamman, Kaliamman, Mariamman** and **Muniswarar** where the priests are exclusively from the depressed or most backward classes. The offerings and system of worship totally differ from that of the other type of temples called "Srikoils".

The offerings of the village deities include meat, fish, chicken, toddy, arrack and cigars. Names of the deities too indicate their low origin and status. They are primitive, rural and live in woods and open plains, probably in a bush or a tree in dark areas. These hut or tree temples are not maintained by endowment boards, nor do they enjoy any properties. The deities receive worship or offerings once or twice a year, that too by threatening their devotees in their dreams. These **village deities are untouchable and unapproachable** to Brah

mins and a portion of the high caste non-brahmins; never visit and worship in such temples.

The "Srikoils", on the other hand, are rich, urban with vast properties and are regularly maintained by endowment boards. They have palatial stone buildings with sky high Rajagopuras, broad and lengthy praharas and other paraphernalia. They bear names such as Venkatachalapathy, Dhandayuthapani and Brihadeeswarar, suggesting their higher social status. They are strictly vegetarians too. Daily, weekly, monthly and periodical poojas and festivals are routine.

The above description shows the existence of two types of temples and gods among Tamils as a result of Aryanisation. History tells us the lengthy wars waged by the immigrant Aryan hordes, on their arrival, with the original settlers, the **Nagas** who not only ruled India but also Sri Lanka. The defeated Nagas were made slaves and called **mlechas, rakshshas** and **dasas.** When the Tamil society was stratified on the basis of Aryan laws, the Nagas were made outcastes, outside the pale of Hinduism. They were further known as **avarnas** (Casteless People) who constituted the **Panchamas**, the **Pamaras** and **Chandallas.** As they continued their opposition to Aryan supremacy and culture, they were degraded and classified as low castes, unfit for association. As a capital and eternal punishment, the Nagas were pushed into the pit of untouchability.[15] In later days they came to be branded non-Hindus to whom the temple was denied.

The present day depressed class people (the Paraiyas, Pallas and Tribes) are the direct descendants of the Nagas.[16] Thus the ancient ruling dynasty, out of animosity, was made the most despicable depressed class. History shows **the Barasivanagas, Sisunagas and Nandas** as the earliest ruling dynasties of India. The Nagas and their descendants followed Buddhism and Jainism, besides their own Siva worship. The ancient Tamil rulers such as Cheras, Cholas, Pandiyas and other local feudatories appear to be the immediate descendants of the Paraiyas and Pallas". [17] They were good farmers, rulers and priests. The most popular and notable priestly class among Paraiyas was the Valluvas to which sage Thiruvalluvar belonged. [18] When temples became Aryan property, these Valluva priests were replaced by Vedic Brahmins.[19] This was done on large scale during the reign of Rajaraja I.

The success of aryanisation in Tamil Nadu made the Brahmins the masters of the situation. When they eradicated and uprooted Buddhism and Jainism,

the Buddhist and Jain temples belonging to Paraiyas and Pallas were confiscated with their properties. Some of them were converted into Hindu temples. The Kamatchiamman temple at Kanchipuram, Thiagarajasamy temple at Thiruvarur and Agneeswaraswamy temple at Thiruppugalur (Nagai-district) are some of the standing examples. According to Gopinatha Rao, K.K. Pillai and Mayilai Seeni Venkatasamy, most of the temples in Tamil country have been converted into Hindu shrines under new names.[20] Most of the temples now maintained either by Brahmins or by non-Brahmin high castes were once in the hands of Paraiyas and Pallas who were then Buddhists and Jains. Thus, what we see today is a paradox because strangely a temple entry challenge is a challenge by the former owners themselves!

The Cure

Having discussed the intricacies of the issue in detail, let us now suggest the probable curative measures.

Judicial

Any denial to the depressed classes to enter into a place of worship or a temple is unconstitutional and a punishable crime under law. The cases related to such temple entry challenges must be judiciously disposed at the earliest in the courts. The duty of the judiciary should not stop here. It should see to it that her verdicts are executed in letter and spirit at the earliest, so that the victims are benefited. But we see many of the court verdicts are uncared, unnoticed and sometimes found in the dustbins. Does this not amount to a contempt of court? If yes, then the court by itself should prosecute the person or office responsible for such lapse and disobedience.

The law says that,

"Any action contrary to court's intentions undermining its authority is contempt". Pratap Banu Metha (Professor of law, J.N. University Delhi) describes the ground reality as follows:

> "There is the supreme irony in the way in which Indian courts have used contempt proceedings when their authority has been questioned but not so much when hundreds of their Judgements remain unenforced". [21]

If the courts do not possess the enforcement power, the same should be made available to them through necessary amendments in the Constitution.

Inspite of a favouable court judgement, the depressed class people of Sivagangai district (Tamil Nadu) are unable to exercise their right of dragging the temple car during festival since 1996. Is this not a case of contempt of court? Here, the challenge is not to the depressed class people, but it is an open challenge to the court, to the government and ultimately, to the constitution. Does the Judgement carry any meaning? When a democratic government with a powerful police force and an enforcement directorate does not execute a court verdict for nearly nine years, can it not be called an act of deceit? Affter all, "Justice delayed is Justice denied".

Steps to be taken

The success of any constitution largely depends on the people who accept and work on it. Fifty-eight years of Independence (1947-2005) is quite a long period for a successful implemention of both the Abolition of Untouchability Act and the Temple Entry Authorization Act, in a democratic setup. If the people concerned are not benefited by these laws, is it due to the uilfull negligence of the men who run the government or due to the indifference of the caste-Hindus towards the laws. Either way it proves the failure of democracy. The general public should be educated again (if not done earlier really) suitably about the **necessity of the abolition of untouchability** rather than the **Act itself.** Similarly, justification of the right to enter into the temples by the depressed class people should be briefed to the authorities concerned. As this matter is related to religion, the government should seek the services of the religious heads, the heads of mutts and other social activists in propagating the justification of the temple entry, at least during such occurrences.

The knowledge about the existence of such social legislations among the public and the officials seems to be poor. The following survey conducted in 1995 shows the reality and the percentage of public awareness of laws. [22]

Sl. No.	Acts	Aware	Notaware
1.	Abolition of untouchability Act	39.2 %	61.8 %
2.	Prevention of Atrocities Act	50.0 %	49.2 %
3.	Protection of civil rights Act	50.8 %	49.2 %
4.	Constitution	37.5 %	62.5 %

Knowledge about the section 7 of the P.C.R Act

Sl. No.	Category	Generally Known	Partially Known	Not at all Known
1.	General SCs	4.3 %	17.0 %	78.7 %
2.	SC intellectuals and leaders	10.8 %	17.0 %	72.2 %
3.	Non SCs	7.9 %	13.5 %	78.6 %
4.	Police	31.7 %	10.0 %	58.3 %
5.	Judges	81.1 %	18.9 %	-

Even after half a century since the laws passed a vast majority of 62% of the people are unaware of the Untouchability Offence Act.

-P.C.R Act is known to 51 %
-Section 7 of the PCR Act is not known to 58% of the Police force, which is the important authority incharge of giving effect to the provision of the law.
-Untouchability Offence Act is not fully known to 85 % of the police force; P.C.R Act 87%; Prevention of Atrocities Act 89%. [23]

When nearly 90% of the police force do not have full knowledge about laws related to depressed class people, we can well imagine the way in which cases related to untouchablity and temple entry are entertained in the police stations and F.I.R registered.

Another version from police department is that in most of the villages and small towns, the caste rules reign; they curtail and constrain the police; Rule of caste supersedes the Rule of law.

The failure or success of a social legislation and an administrative measure would very much depend upon the goodwill, commitment and efficiency of the authorities concerned. Without their co-operation and coordination, no effort will succeed. The important are the police, the prosecutors and the civil rights enforcement directorate. These organizations need suitable education regarding matters and laws related to depressed class people. To facilitate the uplift of the depressed class people, a considerable percentage of their representation in the departments mentioned above is unavoidable and desirable. Similar representation in Hindu Religious and Charities Endowment Boards and in the Judiciary will enrich the quality.

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the National Human Rights Commission should be allowed to interfere in cases related to depressed class. B.S. Sastry, (Chairman, SC/ST Commission) during his Chennai Visit had said in a press meet as follows:

> "Atrocities on SC/STS on the rise; Indifference of officials on promotion norms to SC/ST government servants; indifferent attitudes of the police towards P.C.R. Act". (**Hindu**, dated 15.07.2002) It is disheartening to note that a section of our intelligentsia argue that "**Dalit rights are not human rights**". The NHRC should comeout with a suitable explanation because it is dangerous to think that "**Dalits are not human beings**".

A Judgement delivered in the Madras High Court is relevant here.

> "Enforcement of disability arising out of untouchability is crime against Human Rights and the Constitution entails to the wrong doer with a punishment". [24]

The National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), Peoples Union for Civil liberties (PUCL), Peoples Watch and the Art and Literary Association of Tamil Nadu are the major non-government service organisations whose interference, at times of crisis, provide solace to the depressed classes.

Political parties pay a regular lip service but at the time of crisis they disappear or keep mum. The political parties cherish lofty ideologies and their cry for the cause of depressed classes during elections seem encouraging. If they show the same courage at times of crisis, there will be no challenges to democracy, to the Judiciary and to the depressed classes, including the one at Sornamuktheeswarar temple at Kandadevi village (Sivagangai). Hundreds of laws in favour of the depressed classes might be there on paper but only what is permitted by the society are the real laws. We are better in enacting laws; but poor in their implementation. So far as the uplift of the depressed classes is concerned, India seems to have improved on paper, but not in fact.

End Notes

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24. Refer Paragraph 24 of the Judgement delivered by Justice S.S. Subramani, in civil revision petition No.995 of 1993, Madras High Court.

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Conversion Is A Form Of Protest In Tamil Nadu

Dr.T. Sundararaj *

Conversion has a strong element of protest. The substance of this protest is the defiance of the dominant caste which is exploitative and oppressive. According to B.R. Ambedkhar, conversion can be understood in two ways, material and emotional. The material implications of conversion refer to the social and economic aspects whereas emotional side is related to religious conviction[1]. Conversion is a deep rooted phenomenon where the sociological phase of it implies a form of protest. In the Hindu society where untouchability was reigning like a reign of terror, the subalterns found their way out by embracing non-Hindu religion. The power manager of politics always looked upon conversion with caution and apprehension. Mass conversions were the calculated political protest to warn the Hindu social system to understand mass conversions in association with problems. Such attempts in the course of Indian History always stirred the existing equilibrium of the Hindu society. Conversion is not only religious factor, but a culture which includes attitudinal change and mental make-up of the converted people. Before going deep into the various dimensions of conversion, it is better to define conversion.

Conversion in psychology refers to redirection of one's life as a result of religious experience[2]. Religious experience may be the outcome of an association of any group or individual or a sudden change of mind, either through indoctrination or through material factors. In the frame work of theology, the term conversion refers to a person's adoption of a new faith or his turning from one form of religious life to another[3]. A secular interpretation of the term conversion gives the meaning "a name of a thing or person from one form to another"[4] While we apply the term in a religious context especially in India, it is a change of a person from a religion which is interwoven with numerous factors like political, economic, social and cultural. In India, Hinduism is associated with caste hierarchy. Hence a question arises, a Hindu convert only changes the religion or changes occur in associated factors like political, economic, social and cultural structures. The sociological and anthropological research on this line is unable to give a specific answer to the question raised. In certain pockets of India especially north-east, the change occurs in all spheres, whereas in other parts of India, only conversion without acculturation.

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Conversion in India was largely a group phenomenon. Therefore it was communities, tribes, castes and kin groups rather than individuals, which usually converted. This often meant collective action and implied collective mobilization[5]. T.K.Oomen is of the view that conversion was largely a group phenomenon. According to him, individual and family conversions were confined to upper or intermediate castes. In a region where the untouchable castes got converted, they would experience distinct socio-economic improvement and gain political advantage[6]. Mass conversions during the Muslim rule in India always had a political patronage. As most of the Muslim rulers professed that the non-caste Hindus belonged to no religion. Hence they were compelled to convert into Islam. Following that they became clean in front of Hindu counterparts. This kind of political patronage prepared the ground for mass conversion. To the converts, it was a protest against the ritual domination of the Hindu High Castes. To the Muslim rulers, the numerical strength of the Muslim population increased[7].

In India as noted already, mass conversion depended upon political patronage, whether under Asoka, Kanishka, Harsha, Sultans, Mughals, Portuguese or the British. But the strategies differed in each of the above. The aim of this paper is to concentrate on the conversion and to see when and where it began to affect the body politic of India and assumed the form of a protest.

The arrival of Portuguese in India in 1498 was a landmark both in the history of India and conversion. For the first time, India was opened for Christian Missionary activities. Though the political weight of the Portuguese levelled the Indian resistance to conversion, the missionaries found it hard to break the Indian society fortified by the caste system. From the political point of view, the conversion strategy of the Portuguese is termed as 'Ecclesiastical Colonialism'. The term is applied to designate both the political and spiritual activities of the Portuguese in India in the 16th century[8]. The strategy of the missionaries is of two types, one is the 'filtration model' of the Jesuit Missionary Robert De Nobili and other is the Subaltern model of another Jesuit Missionary, John De Britto[9].

In the words of K.M.Panikkar, "With the Portuguese, Christianization was a state enterprise." The domination of the Portuguese over the coastal regions of Tamil Nadu could be seen under this background. By the capture of Goa in 1510, the Pope was so pleased and in 1514 granted to the King of Portugal the "right of patronage over all the ecclesiastical matters in the East. Thus started the Portuguese 'padroado' or patronage system[10]. Territories were

also placed under the Portuguese ecclesiastical jurisdiction or patronage. The patronage system is nothing but the complete authority of the Portuguese in their settlements both spiritual and political. Accordingly even Pope had only a dejure authority over the spiritual matters of the Portuguese settlements in the East. The King of Portugal was enjoying the defacto right of appointing Bishops and sending missionaries. The Portuguese Government maintained the spiritual colonial set up under their financial assistance[11]. This system worked well in the peak days of the Portuguese in India.

The political net work of the ecclesiastical colonialism was based upon three forces such as the dejure authority of the church, the defacto authority of the ecclesiastical government and the protected Christian subjects. The common link between these forces was the Catholic religion. It was also the unifying force of the ecclesiastical colonialism in Tamil Nadu with the coastal people, Catholic church recruited ecclesiastical subjects, a fact, which had never been accepted by the Jesuit priests[12]. Indeed the Jesuit priests were forced to accept any system devised by the Portuguese, for their security and the success of their vocation. This fact is very clear by appraising the ecclesiastical and political status of Francis Xavier. Apart from being a missionary, he was also the ambassador of the Portuguese king in India[13]. The Jesuit society prohibited its members to enjoy any temporal position outside the domain of religion. In the case of Portuguese and their ecclesiastical framework, one could not dispute his position. So Francis Xavier was considered the first agent of ecclesiastical colonialism in Tamil country.

Like Goa, Kayal in the far south on the fishery coast[14], figured prominently in the affairs of the Portuguese. Vasco-da-gama after his return to Portugal submitted a report of his voyage. He mentioned a place called Kayal where pearls were found and was under the influence of Muslims[15]. Kayal was regarded as the earliest Portuguese centre of attraction on the fishery coast. In 1517, Portuguese established a settlement at Colombo and in 1522; they sent a commission from Cochin to Mylapore to find out the body of St. Thomas[16]. They kept their military forces at Cochin and Colombo[17]. Even during the high days of the ecclesiastical colonialism, they did not shift the camp to the Fishery coast. The proximity of the parava coast to the Colombo settlement of the Portuguese attracted their entry in to the fishery coast. They established themselves in Colombo by armed force and in Cochin by the concession granted by Zamorin at Calicut. In Tamil Nadu, they never resorted to the method of Colombo nor of Cochin. But religion was the only trump card of their spiritual and political domination in the coast.

The insular character and the comparative neglect of the coast by the local rulers caused on easy intervention of the Portuguese. The fishery coast situated within the radius of the Nayak kingdom of Madurai, [18] and the coast of the Kanyakumari [19] under the Travancore Kings[20]. The revenue jurisdiction of the Fishery coast came under the Polygar of Kayatar[21]. Jesuit letters mention that paravas were the tributaries of Madurai[22]. The Nayak at Madurai had less concern over the fishery coast as he was contented with the tribute[23]. The political and commercial confrontations Paravas had with the Arab traders were not tackled by the Nayak. The helplessness of the paravas drove them to the arms of cross[24]. The paravas were sure that Portuguese would be a dependable power since they were the protective allies of the Christians in the west coast[25].

Joao De Cruz, a parava convert acted as a "spiritual broker" to reach an agreement between Portuguese and the paravas. He wrote to the king of Portugal to make the paravas convert to Christianity. He induced the leading men through presents to embrace Christianity and they in turn persuaded their people to do the same[26]. He convinced the paravas to enter into an agreement with the Portuguese. The immediate thing they wanted was relief from the Muslim traders. As a result, 85 Patangatis [27] reached Cochin and entered into an agreement with the Portuguese captain Pero Vaz de Amaras in 1535. The Portuguese saw this into as an opportunity to expand their interest in the Coromandel Coast and arrived there with their fleet in 1536[28]. Father Michael Vaz, the vicar general at Cochin accompanied the fleet with some priests[29]. After the overthrow of the Muhammadens, Vaz baptized 20000 paravas. In due course, the paravas and their chiefs became Christians[30].

The conversion of the Paravas had a tremendous impact not only upon the parava experience but on the foreign policy of the local rulers. The local rulers paid little attention hitherto to the parava affairs and wanted to obstruct the political dominance of the Portuguese. Unable to act outrightly in resisting Portuguese ecclesiastical colonialism, the poligar of Kayatar began to persecute the paravas[31]. In 1544, Rama Raya of Vijayanagar sent his commander Vittala to the south. One of the obvious reasons may be that Vijayanagar did not want to leave the coast entirely under the control of the Portuguese. Xavier in his letters referred to the actrocities committed by the troops of Vijayanagar in the fishery coast[32]. The interference of Francis Xavier under the weight of the Portuguese military superiority brought the tension under normalcy for the time being[33]. The Nayak of Madurai followed the watch and wait policy over the conversion and colonial expansion.

Roche Anthony is of the view that the conversion was the result of an agreement and not imposed by a colonial power[34]. But change of religion of the paravas was dictated by the necessity of the time. Were the Portuguese ready to help the paravas without any obligations? The answer is that they were not. Hence the conversion episode is considered to be the exploitation of the Portuguese over a helpless people. By the terms of partnership, the Portuguese undertook to protect the paravas in return for political and religious allegiance and loyalty. The agreement was a local arrangement made by the paravas and the Portuguese officialdom without the concurrence of the Nayak of Madurai. As a result of this, an extra political network was created by the mutual obligations of the contracting parties under the guise of religion. John Nieuhoff says, "The Nayak of Madurai left the Portuguese in full possession of their jurisdiction over the paravas and of the free exercise of their religion[35]. The extraterritoria status of the paravas against the indigenous rulers was a boon to them spiritually and materially[36].

Kanyakumari was formerly known as the 'granary of Travancore'[37]. The economic geography of the area created an agrarian class structure which coincided with the caste hierarchy. The caste Hindus were the landowners and the non-caste Hindus were tenants and agricultural labourers and they were tied to an agrarian class system. The class system perpetuated an economic and social differentiation and on the apex of the system stood the dominant caste Hindus. Paddy cultivation was considered as status symbol of the dominant class. The social stratification born out of the economic geography primarily depended upon the division of the whole area into Nanjilnadu,[38] and Idinadu[39]. Nanjilnadu is the Wet zone, and therefore economically and socially advanced dominant class settlements are common. Whereas Idainadu is the dry belt evidently with a concentration of the non-caste Hindus. The wetlands of the dry belt were in the hands of the dominant class before the Tamil Integration Movement.

Christianity spread on a geometrical progression in Idainadu, and thereby the concentration of Christians is so high in this area[40]. The cultural lag between the two divisions of land, owing to the economic difference, created social stratification. As a result, the non-caste-Hindus lived in a closed environment and their enterprising traits were bottled for generations together. The plight of the fishermen who lived in the coastal tract of 68 kilometers was still worse and their hand to mouth existence was due to their isolation from the inland. Their ways of life is inseparable from the physical geography, which created a separate identity for them. Moreover, it is very difficult to draw a line between

social and religious realm of the coastal folk. Since land belonged to the church, people economically and spiritually depended upon the church and on the priest[41]. The excessive dependence on the church made them to delink from the immediate neighbours of the inland. Christianity did not provide them base for material progress, but the Christians of the interior did not depend upon the Church for organising their social life[42]. But there is no doubt that Christianity provided a network for the social and material upliftment of the inland Christians.

A rigid stratification due to multitude of differences in ethnic, geographical and religious level restricted social concourse only to the occupational level. In such a social structure, between castes. The conflict between the coastal people and the inland on trivial matters had been part and parcel of the history of the coast[43]. Similarly tension among the Muslims and Hindus and non-caste Hindus and caste Hindus were normal in the district for decades together[44]. In these conflicts, non-caste Hindus and their converts had an upperhand, and their militant attitude had always been looked down with contempt and hatred by others[45]. There was a perfect coordination on the basis of primordial caste affinity. All these conflicts were localized. But the recurrence of such conflicts created wedge between castes. The religious disharmony led to the outburst of the compressed feelings of the dominant class to weaken and dissociate the non-caste Hindus and their converts from the clutches of primordial caste affinity and unity.

The closed environment of the non-caste Hindus and the coastal people had been opened by the contact of cross and crescent. The crescent came to the area through trade links with the Arabs in the 8th and 9th centuries AD[46]. Until the arrival of the Portuguese, the crescent made a tremendous negative impact in Southern Travancore, pulling a micro-minority to their fold[47]. On the other hand, crossentered into India with Portuguese patronage[48]. The political and social compulsions of the period drove the socially deprived and economically crippled to the arms of the Cross. The missionaries of the 16th century under the patronage of the Portuguese padroad,[49] exploited the political instability of Travancore, whose king was then in dire need of the Portuguese support[50]. With due permission from the king of Travancore, people of fourteen coastal villages had been babtized by St Francis Xavier in the months of November and December 1544[51]. The mass conversion of the coastal people into Christianity had a far-reaching effect in the subsequent history of the interior.

The coastal Christians were subjected to persecution of the Hindus, under the indirect support of the king, when the grip of the Portuguese power loosened[52]. The closing years of the 17th century witnessed the conversion of the non-caste Hindus and caste Hindus[53]. Proselytization among the caste Hindus did not sustain due to the attitude of the king[54]. The conversion of the non-caste Hindus became a regular feature because of the Protestant Missionaries of London Mission Society (1806) and the Salvation Army in 1892[55]. Hence the district owes much of its advancement in the educational, social and economic spheres to the efforts of the missionary societies[56].

Christians had an edge over the others in the new role that they had to play in the socio-political structure. The British control over the affairs of Travancore infused fresh courage to the Christians. Having used the British neutrality in religious matters, the missionaries used politico-religious means to absorb the indigenous population into the Christian fold[57]. Possessing of sound organisations and considerable financial resources, the missionaries established schools and colleges[58]. All these developed a kind of aggressiveness and feeling of religious superiority among the Christians[59]. The Christian approach towards Hinduism in Kanyakumari was based on the idea of conquest mentality. The expansionist tendency created a sense of assertiveness over others. The institutionalized aggression in the form of constructing churches in the Hindu dominated areas also accelerated the process of communal disharmony[60].

The church played an active role in shaping and sharpening the poltical consciousness of the people. In view of the second general election in 1957, the Catholic Bishop Conference issued a statement which was read in all the churches of Kanyakumari. The implication of the statement was that Christians did not support candidates who were against religion, morality and the sanctity of family life. In the election that followed, Christians were asked not to vote for Communists and the Dravida Munnedra Khazham (DMK) as they were opposed to religion[61]. The fact was that the caste Hindus of Kanyakumari, before 1967, mostly belonged to the above mentioned political parties. Hence such kinds of open hostile attitude of the church was looked upon with suspicion and concern by the caste Hindus[62]. In the succeeding elections, when Catholic church followed a neutral policy of favouring candidates on merit, the Protestant Church, openly asked the congregation members to vote for Christian candidates of their own denomination[63]. It created a cleavage among the non-caste Hindus and the Christians.

The local Hindu customs were looked down upon by the Christians. The way in which they reacted to such traditional customs and systems wounded the religious sentiments of the Hindus[64]. On the other hand, they preached that Christianity was the only superior faith entrusted with the task of civilizing people[65]. On the walls of the CSI churches, verses like, 'You have no salvation, if you do not accept Christ. The kingdom of Heaven is nearer to you, repent yourself. Jesus Christ is the only God,' were engraved[66]. The prayer meetings and the conventions of the protestant Christians often irritated the Hindus and others by and large. The preachers of the Christian faith used to shout in high pitch through loudspeakers, which proved to be a source of disturbance and annoyance[67]. The Pentecostal Christian conversions often resulted in a revolt against the rituals and customs. A woman convert of this denomination never wore ornaments nor the marriage badge. In such cases, there was always conflict in the family and society. As a result of this, there were many conjugal breakings[68].

The district experienced perfect communal harmony for years together. Religion was no bar for marriage among certain castes people[69]. There was a perfect blending of religious values through marriages and helped the coexistence of the non-caste Hindus and Christians without social conflict. Interreligious visits in the places of worship were quite common[70]. When two religious communities of more or less equal strength with distinct religious practices co-exist within a given territory, two situations could arise. One is that they try to live peacefully, because one cannot drive the other. The second is that perpetual conflict can occur when either of the communities suspects subterranean forces at work in favour of the other community, which may pose a threat to the existing community equation[71]. This actually happened in Kanyakumari among the non-caste Hindus and Christian converts from them[72]. The visible crack in the edifice of the primordial affinity of the non-caste Hindus and Christians of the same caste had been further widened because of the flames of religious animosity fanned by the caste Hindus. They struck at the right time by devising a strategy at the name of religion to turn against each other.

Kanyakumari district was part of Travancore upto 1956. Though the area was under the *Malayalis*, the people retained Tamilian ways of life and preserved their culture[73]. The Tamils felt that their position was insecure as a language minority, due to the merger of Cochin with Travancore in 1951. The Tamil Integration Movement that followed made the State Reorganisation Committee recommend the merger of Tamil speaking areas with Madras State[74]. In the Tamil integration movement, except the Malayalis,[75] all others participated

whole-heartedly. However, leadership remained in the hands of the non-caste Hindus and Christians[76]. The transfer brought a sense of autonomy to the people, awakened them, made them realise their strength and slowly leadership emerged from them in every walk of life. There had been a new cultural, political and social renaissance and affirmation of the Tamils. The merger weakened the hands of the landlords and the farmers began to aquire lands to cultivate them for themselves[77]. So the dominant class was on the wane in money, power and influence. The sense of identity that came into existence in the wake of the Tamil integration among the depressed classes was a reality, which the dominant castes could not digest. Inability of the dominant castes to resist the upward mobility of this class into the social and political arena, further fanned the flames of communal hatred.

The disappearance of the dominant castes from the dominant socio-economic and political roles to a temporary oblivion, made the non-caste Hindus and Christians to play a dominant role in the affairs of the district. The conflict among the religions was nothing but the return of the dominant caste for active social and political roles under the guise of religion. So a crisis at a certain point was bound to come and the dominant castes made use of non-caste Hindus [78] as a scapegoat for their comeback. In this angle, the conflict is viewed as the reaffirmation of the political and social right of the dominant caste minority over the majority.

Hindu revivalism in the district owes, in a large measure, to the Christian expansion[79]. The Hindu leaders in Kanyakumari wanted to arrest the tide of missionary activities. They felt that the other missionary assault on Hinduism came in the form of Western education. No doubt, there had always been in the Hindu mind a feeling of suspicion about the missionaries[80]. Starting of schools by the Hindus was one of the means by which the Christians' endeavour in the field of education was to be thwarted. Accordingly number of schools and colleges had been started in different parts of the district[81]. In such institutions, the non-caste Hindus were not employed. But, due to the Hindu revivalism, the non-caste Hindus found admission into the educational institutions managed by the caste Hindus. It weaned them away from the side of the Christians.

The caste Hindus saw Christianity as a force subverting their traditional privileges and encouraging the unapproachables to defy local customs[82]. Socially, the converts rebelled against the ritual restrictions which the caste system had imposed on them. Economically, conversion loosened the bonds which tied these agricultural castes to the land owning higher castes[83]. On ac

count of these, the caste Hindus took an active part in the Hindu Revivalist Movement. The composition of RSS in the villages attested to this fact. In due course, they admitted the non-caste Hindus to this forum. The new recruits were made to believe that Hinduism was in danger[84].

What really most disturbed the traditionalists in India was radical conversion movements especially those among the lowest, most untouchable castes and tribes. Conversion threatened social structure[85]. They believed that unless such conversions were stopped, Hindus might become a minority[86]. The perception of Ambedkhar in this context is different. He felt that caste is not important within the Muslims and Christians[87]. He felt the liberation of the untouchables depended upon their conversion into a non-Hindu religion[88]. EVR felt that conversion would help the people to come out of ignorance and untouchability[89].

In 1982, one thousand five hundred dalits in Meenaskhipuram in Ramnad district, to escape from the centuries of thralldom, converted into Islam[90]. This bold and desperate action shook the whole India and sent many signals about the outcome of conversion movements. A survey taken by **India-Today** in 2002 after twenty years among the Muslim converts of Meenakshipuram showed that the converted people were rather happy[91]. The Religious Conversion Prevention Law of 2002 of Government of Tamil Nadu was passed to satisfy the political masters of Delhi but it created a mixed reaction. The AIDMK government thought that it was one of the reasons for its defeat in the Parliamentary election of 2004. As a result the law was withdrawn by the government.

Mass conversions helped the untouchable castes to enjoy socio-economic improvement and gain definite political advantage. Hence to a large extent, conversion is considered a protest movement against the tyranny of the upper castes. At the same time, we notice that the Dalit Christians in many parts of the Tamil Nadu are considered like the Hindu counterparts and experience social disability. This dichotomy is based upon caste system. Even the upper-caste converts also follow the same ritual difference with regard to the fellow Christians who belong to the Dalit community. Conversion at times became a trump card to make the government to yield to their demands.

End Notes

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13. Joseph Thekadeth, *op.cit.*, p.83.
14. The Jurisdiction of the Fishery coast extended from Cape-commarin to Pamban in the Coromendal.
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16. *Ibid.*, p.68.
17. Roche, Patrick Anthony, "*The Paravas of the Coromandel. A History of a Sea-Faring Casts*", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Minnesota, 1977, p.67.
18. The Madurai Nayakship was established possibly in 1529. The first Nayak was Viswanatha Nayak.
19. Kanyakumari coast is referred to the coastal region of the present Kanyakumari district starting from Kollancode to Cape-comorin.
20. Ramavarma of Quilon and Martandavarma of Travancore.
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61.Bishop agniswamy of Kottar, Pastral Letter, No. 30, dated 12-2-1961.

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63.Data collected orally and recorded by the investigator from Thiru Rajayyam in 1986.

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68.Data collected orally from Thiru Rjayyam in 1986.

69.*Venugopal Commission Report*, p.2.

70.Information collected and preserved from Prof. V.T.Chellam in 1986.

71.George Mathew, ***op. cit.***, p.414.

72.The Hindu Nadars began to suspect the Christian Nadars of weilding economic and political power in the district.

73.***Census of India***, 1961, ***op.cit.***, p.1.

74.***Ibid.***, p.4.

75.Malayalis refers to the Nayars who had a economic control of the Idainadu before 1956.

76.Marshall Nesamony was the leader of the Tamil Integration Movement. Chidambara Nadar, Ponnappa Nadar and Kanjam Nadar were strong leaders behind Nasamony.

77.Narchison, J.R., and Felix, ***op. cit.***, p.141.

78.Here the term non-caste Hindus is used to refer only to the Hindu Nadars of Kanyakumari District.

79.Venugopal Commission Report, p.110.

80.Sundaralingam, ***op. cit.***, p.34.

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83.Sundaralingam, ***op. cit.***, p.42.

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Subaltern Consciousness And Temple Entry Movement

Dr. C. Thomas*

The word "Subaltern" is a German word meaning "of inferior rank" or "of secondary importance". The term was first used by Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Communist thinker and writer (1891 – 1937). He developed this concept and gave articulation to it in his prison notebooks and in the article "Notes on Italian History". Gramsci felt that the revolutionary movement should start with the every day life of the working masses. His intellectual interpretation and the vision of the mass movement led to the emergence of the subaltern studies.

The school of 'subaltern' studies was launched in 1982 under the editorship of Ranajit Guha. Ranajit Guha and his friends applied the phrase 'Subaltern' to analyze the Indian situation against the colonial background while reconstructing the history of modern India with a particular reference to India's struggle for independence. This school has emerged as a critique of two dominant approaches to the history of India – the Colonialist and Nationalist schools of thought. Ranajit Gaha and his associates rejected both approaches on the grounds that they gave priority to the role of elitist or the dominant class and group in the struggle for freedom. Hence the subaltern studies attempted to highlight the movement of the inferior classes and groups who were oppressed and exploited and to represent the social forces which were in fact contending with those of the elitist or dominant sections. The school of subaltern studies, which emerged in India in the early 1980s, has now gained a world-wide reputation. The subaltern studies began to make its influence feet in Latin American and African studies. Historians and scholars from a variety of disciplines today regularly cite subaltern studies in their work.

The socio-religious issues such as the Temple Entry Movement may be considered as a Subaltern Movement because it was spearheaded by an inferior rank caste and communal groups against the tyranny of the caste system, religious segregation and social discrimination to secure higher social status. The 19th century Temple Entry Movement was a Voluntary Social Reform Movement organised by the Nadar(Shanars) caste to get social equality on par with the Brahmins and other caste Hindus who were considered as the elitist or supe

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rior caste groups. While some of the oppressed groups escaped the clutches of casteism through conversion to Christianity, the rest of them stood within the Hindu Society and fought for their right to enter into the temple for worship. The Temple Entry Movement marked the struggle for socio – religious equality and civil liberties. This movement was not inspired by the British government in Tamil Nadu. But the situation compelled them to interfere in the question of casteism and struggle for social equality. The Temple Entry Movement which was spearheaded by the Nadars in the second half of the nineteenth century found its goals fulfilled in the forties of the twentieth century. In this paper, an attempt is made to discuss the situation in which the Nadars were pushed to the status of inferior social group, background for the rise of caste consciousness among the Hindu Nadars and the attempts made for securing the right to enter the temple to worship in different parts of Tamil Nadu in the second half of the 19th century within the subaltern conceptual framework. Prof.B.Sobhanan and Prof.C.Paramarthalingam have traced the socio-religious protests spearheaded by the Hindu Nadars to secure higher social status and civil liberties. As the people who were pushed to inferior status joined together and attempted to secure right to worship in the temples, their struggle is discussed within the conceptual frame work of subaltern school of thought.

The Sastric Rules and Customs Pushed the Nadars to Inferior Status

The temples played a predominant role in the socio-religious life of the people of the Indian Society. Temples were constructed for the purpose of worship and thereby facilitating social integration and spiritual development of the people. But certain sections in the Hindu society, such as the Nadars, the Komutti Chettis and untouchables were not allowed to enter the temples to worship gods and goddesses. The migration of the Aryans to South India and the introduction of the conventional system of *Varnashrama dharma* led to the discrimination between castes and social jealousies that have characterised South India[1]. They created the distinction between the upper and lower status in the Tamil society. The Brahmins who formed a microscopic minority (a small group) emerged as the arbiters and peace makers and extended their counsel to the ruling kings. By virtue of their spiritual authority, they wielded considerable influence in the society[2]. The Brahmins expounded a model of the caste system which placed them at the top and gave them the privilege of declaring the duties of other castes including the kings.

Generally the custodians of the temples decided the rules and regulations for the movement of the people. The temple administrators wielded vast influence in the state through the accumulation of wealth, ownership of vast estates, control of business establishments and credit, enjoying key positions, celebration of festivals and promotion of art and letters and deciding social status. The right to enter certain parts of the temple, right to participate in certain ceremonies, rites and festivals were visible expressions of the accepted hierarchy of communities and individuals[3].

The sastric rules and the age old customs upheld the pride and honour of the Brahmins and other caste Hindus. Subsequently the temple administration identified the privileges of superior caste Hindus with the laws of the land and refused to respect the self respect and honour of the inferior caste. The rulers, along with the temple administration, denied to the lower castes the right to walk along the roads around the temple and worship in the temple. Inspite of the massive strength of the non-caste Hindus, they were afraid of questioning the long established system and hence accepted the spiritual and temporal predominance of the caste Hindus.

There were certain restrictions imposed on the several groups to regulate the right to worship gods and goddesses. The *Bhattars* alone were permitted to enter the inner shrine or the *garbhagriha* of the temple. The people next to the Brahmins in social status, especially, the caste Hindus, belonging to the *Valankai* castes were allowed to go near the steps in front of the *garbhagriha* for devotional acts. The Vaisyas and the Sudras were allowed to worship god from the bhadra mantapa and the untouchables could worship gods from outside the gopuram without entering. Karanagama Sastra states that the menstruating women and chandalas should not enter the prakaras when the god is in procession during the festival time[4]. In case of violation, severe punishment would be inflicted. As the Nadars belonged to the Sudra caste, they were probably allowed upto the flag-mast as it was conceded in the Tiruchendur Temple Entry Case (1872)[5].

The Nadars enjoyed a higher status in the society prior to the expansion of the Muslim and Telugu rule in Tamil Nadu. The Nadars asserted themselves to be the descendants and representatives of the ancient ruling race of Pandya and Chola kings[6]. The Nadar community occupied a high place among the right hand classes. They were known as *valankai – Ugarvu Kondar or Valankai – Uya Kondar*[7]. The invasion of the Muslims and Nayaks in Madurai

inflicted a serious blow to the glory of the Nadars. The Nayak rulers closed the western gate of the Meenakshi Temple at Madurai to the Nadars and it was through this gate that the Pandya kings are believed to have entered the temple accompanied by the Nadars. Subsequently, the entry to the Nadars was prohibited in the nearby temples and gradually it became a custom[8]. Besides this political reason, the Nadars were denied entry into certain temples as they were involved in the tapping of the palmyras and consumed toddy, which was considered a *panchamapathaka*. The *Panchamapathakas* included such acts as the killing of Brahmins, involving in adultery, drinking of liquor, theft of gold and connivance at committing any of these offences[9]. Though the Nadars belonged to the Right-hand group, they were not given higher social status and treated on a par with the Left-hand castes because of the change of political system and their major profession of today tapping and drinking toddy which was considered one of *panchamapathakas*.

Rise of Subaltern Consciousness

In the beginning of the European colonisation, the condition of the Nadars remained miserable. However, the spread of Christianity, advent of western education and the accumulation of wealth through trade had created the caste and communal consciousness among the inferior groups. So the Nadars tried to regain their glory and elevate their status on par with the superior groups. In the census record of 1871, it was mentioned that the Nadars claimed descent from a great warrior caste traced to the *Aryan Kshatriyas*. The Administration Report of Police in 1889, recorded that the Nadars claimed descent from the Rajputs and had a right to wear the *punnul* (sacred thread) and claimed a higher caste gradation than they were generally admitted[10]. Further, the Hindu Nadars found that the converted Christians Nadars enjoyed the right to worship in the churches. Hence they decided to secure equal privilege with other caste Hindus and to get the right to enter sanctumsanctorum to worship. But the Brahmins and other caste Hindus were determined to obstruct the Nadar's attempt to elevate their status on par with the superior caste groups.

Attempts to Temple Entry

Vellayan, a member of the Nadar community, decided to challenge the restriction imposed by the caste Hindus in the famous Kumaracoil Temple situated near Nagarcoil in Kanyakumari District. Vellayan accompanied by 12000

Nadar devotees, entered the temple. The caste Hindus especially the Nairs and the Brahmins resisted their entry and in the open fighting, more than one hundred and fifty Nadars were killed[11].

In September 1860, the Nadars in Aruppukkottai got permission from the District Magistrate in Madurai to take out a procession in palanquins during marriage and festive occasion[12]. The caste Hindus thought that it was contrary to custom and caste rights and privileges inherited by them from time immemorial[13]. So the caste Hindus got the support of the Maravas, Labbeys, Pallas, Pariahs, Weavers and Barbers against the Nadars. Nearly ten thousand people joined together and attacked the Nadars in Aruppukkottai, damaged 110 shops and as a result, the Nadars lost property worth rupees three thousand[14]. In fact, the incident at Aruppukkottai was the calculated and deliberate attempt of the caste Hindus to shatter the Nadar's basic right of freedom of worship.

In another attempt, the Nadars were prevented from entering the Chokkanathaswami temple at Aruppukkottai, which was under the control of Bhaskara Sethupathi, the Raja of Ramanathapuram. Hence they constructed the Amuthalingeswarar temple in 1886[15]. Besides, the Nadars constructed a Bhadrakali temple on the northern side of Sivakasi town and Mariamman temple on the east of the town[16].

In 1872, the Nadars attempted to enter the Subramaniyaswami temple at Tiruchendur. The temple authorities filed a case against seven Nadars. The Tirunelveli District Magistrate, A.P.Arundale acquitted them on the grounds that the entry of the Nadars up to the flagmast was no way amounted to polluting the sanctity of the temple[17]. Thus the permission granted to the Nadars to carry out rituals with the assistance of the priests near flagmast marked the first victory for them in gaining entry into the temple.

In 1878, a group of Nadars tried to assert their right to enter the Meenakshi temple in Madurai. A Nadar by name Mukka Nadan entered the temple and went up to the parrots altar and worshipped goddess Meenakshi. The Temple servants put him to death. The District Judge also refused to grant right to the Nadars to enter the temple[18]. In the same year, the Nadars of Tirutangal in Srivilliputtur taluk, attempted to enter the Siva temple to worship god. The District Munsiff of Srivilliputtur issued an injunction prohibiting the Nadars from entering the temple and also offering coconuts to the deity[19]. In 1890, the Nadars of Madurai and Tiruchuli tried to enter the Meenakshi Sundareswaran temple at Madurai and Bhuminatha temple at Tiruchuli respec

tively. The District Magistrate compelled them to remit fine for not respecting the tradition[20].

The Nadars made another attempt to establish their right to enter and worship in the Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple of Kamudi, which was administered by the Raja of Ramanathapuram. On the night of 14th May 1897, a group of fifty-six Nadars led by Irulappa Nadan, forcibly entered the temple with *Kavadi*[21], torches and drums. They went upto the sanctum sanctorum and re-lighted the extinguished torches near the principal deity and offered coconuts[22]. A criminal case was filed against fifteen Nadars for defiling the temple. The Sub-Magistrate of Muthukulattur acquitted them[23]. However, on 20 July 1899, the Sub-Judge of Madurai East issued an injunction restraining the Nadars from entering the temple at Kamudi in future[24]. On 14th February 1908, the High Court at Madras (Chennai) affirmed the verdict of the lower court[25]. In 1908, the Privy Council in London confirmed the judgment of the Madras High Court. The Privy Council claimed that the position of the Nadars appeared to be just above that of the pallars and pariahs, who were regarded as unclean and prohibited from worshipping in the Hindus temples. At the same time, the Privy Council recognised the right of the Vellalars, Maravars and other cultivating castes usually classed as the Sudras to worship in the Hindu temples[26]. The European Officials did not wish to interfere in the caste based worship system that prevailed in the Hindu temples. So the affected Nadars, who enjoyed inferior status in the society, could not get social justice from the British Officials.

Another important historical attempt of the Nadars was to claim right to enter into the Siva temple at Sivakasi. On 16th July 1898, when the Nadar boys tried to enter into the Viswanathaswami Temple at Sivakasi, the temple servants kept them out closing the front door. The Puja was performed with closed doors[27]. On 7th September, two Nadars entered the Viswanathaswami temple at Sivakasi in the day time and offered prayers. On the same day, the temple authorities closed the door of the temple and it was remained closed till 6th June 1899[28].

The anti-Nadar groups especially the Maravars decided to ransack the Nadars of Sivakasi. About 4000 Maravars with sticks, sickles and guns led by Vellaiya Thevan entered the town of Sivakasi an 6th morning. In the riots, anti-Nadars murdered twenty-five Nadars and destroyed several houses and caused a heavy loss to their wealth[29]. The incompetence and indifference of the district officials mostly helped the non-Nardars to commit whole sale murder, blood

shed and arson. If the District Officials had taken precautionary measures, the riots which occurred in June 1898 at Sivakasi might have been prevented[30]. Very shortly, the riots spread to Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli districts. In spite of the Nadars making several efforts to get social justice and to get the right to enter into the temples to worship, the trustees of the temples and the British administration did not take any effort to provide rights to the Nadars to enter into the temples and worship. Yet, subsequently when the political parties took the issue of right to temple entry and agitated for granting right to the inferior class including the Nadars and other untounchables, the government enacted acts in the 20th century to provide legal rights to them.

Hence the Sastric laws and the traditional custom created two social groups in Tamilnadu, namely, the dominant and the subaltern. The caste Hindus including the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins considered the profession of palmyra climbing in which the Nadars were engaged and the habit of drinking toddy as the attributes of inferiority. The progress of education among the Nadars and development of their economic status encouraged them to take determined efforts to attain the legitimate status in the Hindu society.

The temple entry movement started by the Nadars in the second half of the nineteenth century culminated in the later struggle against untouchability, unapproachability, social discrimination and social segregation and further represented the fight-for socio-religious equality and civil liberties. The attempt of the Nadars to secure the legitimate rights created animosity of the caste Hindus and other non-Nadars of the Hindu society. In this connection, Prof.B. Sobhanan pointed out that the society was virtually divided into two hostile factions like the plebeians and patricians of the Roman Empire. All the non-Nadar communities, forgetting their superior and inferior distinctions, joined together and organized severe opposition against the Nadars.

The British administrators, though they understood the injustice prevailed in the Hindu society in Tamil Nadu, did not initiate any permanent solution to get justice for the Nadars. They thought that their interference in favour of the Nadars would induce the non-Nadars to work against the very existence of the foreign rule. Thus the Temple Entry Movement started by the subaltern group in Tamilnadu did not bring any legislation immediately to provide legitimate rights to the Nadars. Yet the civil rights movement started by the Nadars became a pioneer and subsequently it became a model for future agitations for securing temple entry rights.

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Plight Of Dalits And Their Problems In Temple Entry In Tamil Nadu A Case Study

A. Mani*

The Indian social structure perpetuates the system of stratification wherein the upper castes maintain social distance and continue the practice of social discrimination against the lower caste groups. This discriminative practice leads to certain social evils like Untouchability and conflict between the upper and lower caste groups in Indian social scenario. Traditionally the upper caste had access to ownership of means of production particularly land ownership, higher socio economic status, life styles related to their supremacy and dominance over the low caste people. The lower caste people have been dependent on upper caste for their livelihood in general, employment in particular as they are mostly agricultural labourers or other casual labourers.

This condition of supremacy and dominance on account of higher socio economic status of upper castes has led to the exploitation of the lower and this has resulted in consistent dependency of the lower upon higher castes in the rural social structure.Taking advantage of the programmes of protective discrimination promoted by the Government of India, the lower caste people have elevated their socioeconomic status. The people have been subjected to suppression, oppression, exploitation and victimization by the upper castes. Scheduled Caste people (Pallan, Parayan, Sakiliyan in Tamilnadu context) have started showing symptoms of development in their socio economic status. The trend of elevation of social status was very much discernible owing to intensive participation of Scheduled Caste students in education which has also resulted in employment as well as in political participation.

The improved socioe-conomic status of the Scheduled Caste people in rural Tamilnadu has checked the continuing dominance of caste Hindus and ensured their role in decision making. The educated and empowered Scheduled Caste in general and the creamy layer in particular have started exercising their dominance over the high caste people in view of their position in government as well as economic strength in villages.

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The changing pattern of socio-economic leadership has led to the feud between Upper caste Hindus and lower caste Scheduled Caste people resulting in social tension between them, with a view to sustaining the ritual supremacy upon the lower. The upper caste people who, on account of loss of their traditional power structure, started their conflict with the Scheduled Caste people through strict enforcement of untouchability. To counter this, the employed and empowered Scheduled Caste people took recourse to the provision of Protection of Civil Rights Act and started teasing the upper caste people. This has further aggravated tension between high caste and low caste people in rural society. The Scheduled Caste people considered the Upper caste actions as violation of their civil rights. The tension surfaced through organized attempts of clash between the upper caste Hindus and Lower caste (S.C) people.

When the situation went out of cootrol, the educated and the empowered Scheduled Caste people thought that it is not worth while to remain in the Hindu fold. They wanted to change their faith from Hinduism to either Christianity or Islam.The religious conversion taking place in Tamilnadu is viewed in this background of socio economic mobility among lower caste people. The protest of the scheduled caste people has liberated them not only from the upper caste atrocities but also ensured their civil liberties.

The case study presented below makes amply clear that the religious conversion of the Scheduled Caste people is related to the atrocities perpetrated on them by the upper caste Hindus.

Case study No.I: K.Ayyampalayam

K.Ayyampalayam, located about 10 kms west of Palladam Town and about 50 kms from Coimbatore City, belongs to Palladam Taluk of Coimbatore district. It is a village panchayat. The village is inhabited by Dalits and Kongu Vellala Goundars. The latter are the dominant caste. They are mostly land owning agriculralists, owners of powerlooms, and industrialists. This is the pattern to be found not only in this village but also in the whole district which is dominated by this group of Goundars.

The prefix Kongu indicates a region, which is understood as a Nadu (Country) in traditional Tamil society. M.Karuppusamy, Yokob (Murugan) of the lower caste and K.Kandasamy, P.Kumarasamy and Velusamy of the upper

caste have narrated in detail the incidents of caste conflict and religious conversion in this village. Henceforth the lower caste and the upper caste will be referred to as Dalits and caste Hindus respectively.

The Dalits are mostly agricultural labourers who are dependent on the caste Hindus for their livelihood. The lower caste people served as servants of the community in the traditional society and they were messengers, drum beaters and cobblers (leather workers). The lower caste people were mostly un educated and their mobility was also very much limited within the village. Even today the lower caste people are denied temple entry, tap water and other facilities and access to common properties in the village. Access to community life also is denied to them by the caste Hindus. Each caste has a separate burial ground, its own barbers, dhobis etc. They are separated from the main village and settled in an isolated living area where only the lower caste groups traditionally live.

This pattern of settlement of lower castes is called "colony settlement". The two tumbler system is observed in refreshment stalls (tea stalls) in the village with separate tumblers for the Dalits and the caste Hindus.The Dalits who are educated and are employed outside are perceived as deviants from their traditional profession. The educated and enlightened Dalits do not accept the traditional practice of untouchability and other discriminatory practices of the caste Hindus.

Trouble began in the village nearly four years ago when the scheduled caste people were ill-treated in the work places. They were beaten and abused. For instance, Mohan Ramaswamy and his brothers are big landlords from the upper caste who have the habit of beating Dalits working under them. In a period of three months, they have beaten about 65 Dalits in the village.

These incidents happened often and led to the formation of a caste organisation in the name of Tamilnadu Arunthathiyar Democratic Federation. This organization enlightened their members by providing knowledge of legal rights guaranteed by the Protection of Civil Rights Act (PCR Act) etc. The Dalits filed a case against the caste Hindus under the PCR Act. Consequently, two persons were arrested and remanded for 15 days. After this, the incidents of beating and other atrocities against the Dalits came to an end. But the practice of untouchability continued in one way or the other, denying Government benefits to the lower castes in the local Panchayat administration.

During the village festival time every year, the Dalits play drums in front of the Mariamman temple. But, in a particular year, the Dalits refused to play the drums which led to strained relationship between them and the caste Hindus.

The Dalits have a regular place of worship which is located about 200 feet away from the temple. But enlightened, educated Dalits claimed equal rights to worship on par with the caste Hindus. The caste Hindus did not accept the demand which precipitated a caste conflict. This conflict has created havoc in social life.

Case study No. II: Koothirambakkam (Kancheepuram District)

Koothirambakkam is located 15 kms from Kancheepuram Town and 75 km from Chennai, with 58 Dalit families and 360 upper caste families living in it. Situated near Kancheepuram, the village is dominated by Vanniyars and Yadhavas. Most of the Vanniyar families are land owning agriculturists. The Dalits are mostly agricultural labourers depending upon the Vanniyars for their livelihood. V.Madhurai, an educated, Government employed lower caste man, is the leader of the Dalits. Marisamy from the caste Hindus explained the conflict and conversion process.

The trouble started in the village nearly three decades ago in 1976 when a Dalit family was abused for fetching water from the village pond. Normally Dalits are not allowed to take water directly from the pond. The caste Hindus used to pour water to the Dalits. But, in that year, some Dalits directly entered the water pond which precipitated inter-caste animosity. The caste Hindus perceived this incident as pollution of their purity which erupted into a caste conflict and it continued for 16 years. In the meantime, the Dalits perceived their rights and their claim to equality. In 1979, drum playing Dalits demanded temple entry and procession of the temple car into the Dalit colonies, failing which they threatened not to play the drums.

The caste Hindus brought people from outside the village for drum playing and completed the festival formalities. The next year the caste Hindus celebrated the village festival without the contribution and the participation of the Dalits which created tension in the village. The Dalits demanded equal participation in the Muthumariamman temple procession. A Peace Committee was constituted by the Kanceepuram District Collector and a meeting was held in the presence of the District Collector, the Tahsildar and other Government

officials.The caste Hindus agreed to a settlement by collecting a share to meet (Rs.100/-) expenses from the Dalits for the village festival. Agreement was reached on equal rights in management and temple worship. But the caste Hindus later did not conform to the agreement. They went to the court in order to uphold their right over the temple. The court ruled that the caste Hindus can manage the temple and the Dalits can participate in festivals. Thereafter, the Dalit demand for entering the temple, refusal by the caste Hindus and organising Peace Committee have become regular feature in this village since 1995.

The Dalits decided to enter the temple, which created tension in the village. A Peace Committee meeting was organised on 18.10.1995. No solution was found. The DSP in the Peace Committee meeting itself told the Dalits that he would smash them there itself. This incident prompted the Dalits' decision to embrace Islam on 1st January 1996. But the conversion did not take place because Government officials requested the Dalits to wait for some time. Vanitha, a Dalit woman said "Most of our men have now left the village looking for jobs because they could not get jobs in the village. We are unsettled and feel insecure." The elderly woman said that Vanniyars, through an "Oor Panchayat" decision, prevented their people form giving jobs to Dalits and even talking to them:

Now the Dalits decided upon the extreme step of demanding entry into the temple of Muthumariamman in 2002. The temple is under the control of the caste Hindus but the Dalits wanted the temple procession to go along their colony. The Vanniyars took this move as an insult to their community since the village festival is dominated and controlled by them. More than 10 temples are available in the village. The Dalits are claiming right over only the Muthumariamman temple because their money and labour were involved in it. But in September 2002, the Dalits warned the district administration that if their demand was not met, they would embrace Islam. The Dalits approached the "Kanchee Sankara Math" leader for a solution to this problem. But their request was not granted.

Now, the Dalits realised their position in Hindu society and Hindu religion. All the Government officials supported only caste Hindus. The only way to resolve the 25 year old problem was religious conversion. So they decided to embrace Islam in 2002.The Dalits approached Muslim leaders for help in the

religious conversion and they also agreed. But the police prevented the entry of Muslim leaders into the village and banned the conversion.

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Central and State Legislative Measures For Temple Entry, 1933-1939

G.Rengaraju *

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to highlight the Central and Madras Provincial Legislative bills on the temple entry issue in the erstwhile Madras Province. Temple entry by the depressed people formed on important chapter in the Social Reform Movement in modern era. Gandhi and congress advocated temple entry vigorously after the initiation of constructive programme in 1927.

Initiation from Gandhi and Congress

As a commitment to his stand on untouchables, M.K. Gandhi issued a public statement from Yerwada Prison on 25th September 1932, " It has been a matter of increasing joy to find great ancient temples being opened to the so called untouchables and thus becoming purified... speaking as a Hindus striving to find and to live up to the very essence of it, I say without the slightest hesitation that God will be installed in the idol of the temples only if they are thrown open to the outcastes. Today with human outcaste, God himself is an outcaste"[1]. To fulfil the ambition of M.K. Gandhi, Rajaji along with Rajendra Prasad proclaimed the birth anniversary of M.K.Gandhi as the "anti-untouchability week"[2]. It was observed throughout India from 27 September in which leaders and reformers from all walks of life attended a number of meetings and created public awareness for the abolition of untouchability.

The Congressmen formed the All-India Anti-Untouchability League with branches in different provincial centers on 30th September 1932. G.D.Birla was the President and Amritlal V.Tankkar was the General Secretary of the League and Delhi was the headquarters of the League[3]. The main objectives of the League were the abolition of untouchability and the opening of temples through peaceful persuasion as early as possible[4]. These views were mostly accepted by the public and more than 150 temples were thrown open to the untouchables in different parts of India[5]. In response to M.K.Gandhi's appeal, sanatanist leaders like T.C.Srinivasa Iyengar, K.R.Venkatrama Iyer and others

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made a public statement emphasizing the need to throw open the Indian temples to the untouchables for national unity and Hindu solidarity. The Madurai Devasthanam Committee meeting held on 7th October 1932, resolved to introduce early legislative measures to remove these disabilities.

Central Legislative Bills

Based on the views of the meetings, the Government allowed C.S. Ranga Iyer to introduce "Temple Entry Disabilities Removal Bill" (Reproduction of P. Subbarayan's Madras Temple Entry Bill) on 24th March 1933. When the bill was introduced, it was opposed by an orthodox member, Vasudea Raja of Kollengode because it involved the religious matters of the Indians and this bill was against the proclamation of Queen Victorica[6]. However, R.K. Shanmuga Chetti, a non-Brahmin leader and President of the Assembly welcomed this bill for legislation[7]. Therefore, it was a struggle between M.K. Ganhdi and his sympathizers on one side and caste-Hindus on the other side[8]. Finally, Sir Henry Haig, the Government spokesman asserted in the assembly that this bill was impracticable and inequitable and it would lead to serious disorders. It should be introduced only through persuasion of the orthodox people and public opinion must be sought[9].

As the report of the public opinion was not received in time, M.C. Rajah who introduced the Abolition of Untouchablity Bill, withdrew it on 23rd August 1934[10]. As the attempt failed, C.S. Ranga Iyer wanted to introduce the bill in the Central Assembly. But his attempt was also not successful because the assembly was dissolved and fresh election was ordered[11]. During the election time, the introduction of this bill was important and Congress leaders failed to support it. If they had supported, they could not get the votes of orthodox people[12]. So they quoted the views of B.R.Ambedkar for temple entry. This change of Congress attitude was very clear when G.K. Devadhar, the President of Maharastra H.S.S indicated the relaxation in the stand of the Congress on temple entry to Harijans[13]. When they approached Rajaji to know the stand of Congress in the coming election, he viewed that Congress would not approach the people for claiming votes for the support of the temple entry bill and Congress would not involve in any measures which would impair its interest in election. It obviously showed that the Congress took double stand in C.S. Renga Iyer's bill. He was against the view of Rajaji and the Congress leaders were not bold enough to face the public with well defined political issues and principles during the election time[14].

C.S. Renga Iyer said: " By his statement, Rajaji had driven the last nail on the coffin of the temple entry bill, while the same Rajaji and other Congressmen earlier went to Delhi session from door to door begging for the support of the Assembly members". He further remarked that "either the Congressmen were cowards or they had no conviction in the bill". He added "In the name of non-violence and religion, Congressmen had side tracked the vital temple entry issue. They were slaves and they should remember that the Hindu religion was not a 'humbug' like Congress politics and God was greater than M.K. Ganhdi and these religious questions were bigger than Congress planks". C.S. Renga Iyer concluded that when the community is ablaze, when the opposition is uncompromising, there was no use of forcing a piece of legislation like his bill through the house even if there was a chance for it[15]. Thereupon on the united opposition shown by the Government, the sanatanist and the Congressmen to the bill, C.S. Renga Iyer withdrew it on 23rd August 1934.

Madras Provincial Legislative Bills

After the Central Legislative Assembly elections held under the Indian Council Act of 1935, Congress leaders were in jubilant mood[16]. They wanted to throw open temples to the depressed people as in the case of Tranvancore. Drafting the Madras Hindu Temple Entry Disabilities Removal Bill with the assistance of Rajaji in January 1937, M.C. Rajah sought the help of the former to introduce it in the Madras Legislature. To satisfy the desire of M.C. Rajah, Rajaji insisted the Madras Government for the careful consideration and introduction of M.C. Rajah's Bill in the Legislature on 18th March 1937. As a step further in this direction, Rajaji made a statement at the meeting of Tanjore Circle Temple Committee, on 5th May 1937 that he could not rest at peace for a minute longer without securing temple entry for Harijans and invited M.C. Rajah to introduce a bill in the Madras Legislature[17]. On 19th Rajaji, the Premier of Madras State expressed his intention to introduce the bill of M.C.Rajah in the Assembly. So M.C.Rajah introduced his bill on 30th March 1938. It provided for the practical expression of the people's desire when they wished to allow Harijans to join them in worship in their temples. It did not seek to throw open the doors of temples to Harijans all at once, whether caste-Hindus liked it or not. There was not a piece of compulsion in it. The provisions of the bill stood for creating machinery for the education and ascertainment of public opening and for giving practical expression to it. If the majority of caste-Hindu worshippers decided to open any of their temples in their area to Harijans, the bill enabled them to do so even though a small minority objected to it and vice

versa[18]. To the surprise of all, Rajaji who gave his consent to introduce the bill opposed the bill of M.C. Rajah. He stated that the Malabar region was closely connected with language, custom, religious institutions and people of Tranvacore State. Therefore, he pointed out that it would be wiser to proceed from Travancore to Malabar along lines of least resistance and it had the unique advantages of being the most enlightened part of the Madras State. Therefore, he appealed to M.C. Rajah to drop his bill. As the government itself was of the opinion that a measure for temple entry in Malabar at first and the same measure was to be extended later on to other parts of Madras State. He also observed that would be introduced simultaneously, all the temples in the State could not be opened when the public was immersed in ignorance and superstitions.

There was a great support to Rajaji's idea in the Assembly from the members. To support Rajaji's method of approach, V.I. Muniswami Pillai, a minister, appealed to M.C. Rajah to agree to the views of Rajaji[15]. He also pacified M.C.Rajah, expressing that after the introduction of a Malabar bill, the Government would sincerely bring a new bill covering mostly all the provisions of the bill of M.C. Rajah. Even Kumararaja Muthiah Chettiar, a leader of Justice Party also appealed to M.C.Rajah to agree with Rajaji's method[20]. T. Prakasam, another Congress member too requested M.C. Rajah to withdraw the bill as 250 members of the Legislature insisted for it. The enraged M.C. Rajah retorted that if he accepted the request of 250 representatives of the Assembly here, he could not answer to 250 million people. Further he vehemently abused Rajaji for his change of mind in a week[21] and blamed him for cheating and the people. He also emphasized his stand that he was unwilling to withdraw his bill[22]. Finally M.C. Rajah remarked that he was deceived in his attempts to allow the Harijans into the temples through legal means and referred the motion to the select committee for opinion. His bill was supported only by twenty-four members and 130 members opposed and eight members were neutral. Thus the motion was not passed[23].

Thereupon, R. Venkatsubbu Reddiar, a Madras legislator felt that the denial of temple entry to the untouchables would affect the purity, strength and solidarity of the Hindus. Therefore, to protect interest of Hinduism and Hindu social polity, he drafted the 'Madras Hindu Temple Entry Bill' on 21st August 1937 and sought to allow depressed class people of Hindu religion to enter into the temples like that of the caste-Hindus. It agreed that temple entries would be a allowed on the condition prescribed in the matter of dress, personal cleanliness and conduct. It sought to nullify all the customs, usages, restrictions, etc.,

to such entry of the depressed classes. It also provided to collect a fine not exceeding Rs.100/- from those who were convicted by the magistrate as obstructers. However, when the bill came for scrutiny, the Madras Government felt it as a far-reaching one. But the sanatanist members did not like to introduce the bill. Harijan Sevak Sangh (H.S.S), which was fighting for the cause of temple entry to the untouchables protested against the Madras Government and it demanded a special legislation for Malabar.

Malabar Temple Entry Bill

At this juncture, Rajaji ministry introduced the 'Malabar Temple Entry Bill' in the Legislative Assembly on 1st December 1938. Accordingly, it enabled the trustees of temples in Malabar to throw open them to Harijans if the opinion of the majority of the worshippers was found to be in favour of such a step. It also mentioned that the requisition signed by not less than fifty voters for opening the temple should be forwarded to the Madras Government for action[24]. There was also another provision in the bill that if the trustees of the temples wanted to throw any temple to Harijans without reference to voters, they could do so.

When the bill was introduced in the Assembly, T.T. Krishnamachari, an orthodox member opposed it on the grounds that provincial legislature could not legislate this bill as it was related to religious institutions. But the speaker of the Assembly rejected his plea as it was not a federal subject and affirmed that it was within the power of the provincial legislature. N. Natesh Iyer, another critic, opposed the bill of Rajaji. He observed that there were two motives behind the bill. Firstly, the bill was introduced in Malabar district with intention to stir the people of Cochin against its ruler who denied temple entry. Secondly, the author of the bill planned to keep his ministry for its life period from the wrath of sanatanists, by not introducing any temple entry legislation in Tamil Nadu. Therefore, it was very obvious that Rajaji was planning to shift the responsibility for temple entry legislation on to a new government[25]. Thereupon, the bill was left to scrutiny for select committee on 2nd December 1938. After careful modifications, the committee submitted it to the Government on 5th December 1938. Finally the bill was again taken up for discussion in the Legislative Assembly on 8th December 1938 and passed without any material change in the Assembly.

As a next step, the Rajaji introduced the bill in the Legislative Council, on 13th December 1938. Two members of the opposition, R. Narayana

Swami Naidu and Maniayya Hedge raised some clarifications and stated that it would lead to conflict with customs and usages, and agamas and sastras. However, the bill was passed into law as "Malabar Temple Entry Act" on 13th December 1938. Finally, this Act received the assent of the Governor on 18th January 1939 and promulgated on 7th February 1939. Though the act was passed, it could not be implemented in Malabar because the temples were managed by private trustees[26]. It clearly showed that unless permissive legislations were followed up by regular and systematic propaganda in favour of them, they could not yield good results. Nevertheless, the Malabar Temple Entry Legislation had its echo in Tamil Nadu. In this connection, the Tamil Nadu Provincial Political Conference held at Rajapalayam on 31st December 1938 passed a resolution which appealed to all temple trustees and managements in Tamil Nadu not to wait for similar legislations. They should open voluntarily, generously and gracefully all temples to the Harijans as early as possible.

Conclusion

The passing of the legislative bills is a continuous process. Both Central and State governments have analysed the subject of temple entry question and passed the bills into law amidst strong resistance raised by the orthodox people. In this connection, Madras Province was the pioneer in passing the temple entry bills. Really, Rajaji studied and analysed the situation in Madras Province and at first implemented temple entry in Malabar region which was part of the Madras Province. After its success in Malabar, Rajaji wished to implement temple entry in other parts of Madras Presidency.

End Notes

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Travancore Temple Entry Proclamation And Its Impact In Tamil Nadu

R. Kumaran *

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to trace the historical background for Troavancore Temple Entry Proclamation and its impact in Tamil Nadu. This Proclamation is indeed a landmark of the socio-political change not only in Kerala but also in Tamil Nadu. In the first half of the twentieth century, the social reformers felt the issue of Temple is of primary importance in the agitation against the eradication of untouchablity.

Structure of the Society

Temples have played a predominant role in the socio-religious life of the people. The assemblies of temple became the makers of rules and regulations to control the activities of the people. The temples were closely associated with the institution of the caste system. The ancient Tamilnadu was not familiar with Brahmanical Hinduism or the four-fold division of society. Many Tamil classics attest that the Tamil society had a harmonious classification, (occupational division of society). No distinction was made on the basis of birth. Untouchability, unapproachability, unseeablity and similar disabilities were unknown to the ancient Tamils. Free social movement and relations existed among the different groups[1]. Following the large scale migration of the Aryans to the Tamil country, Tamil society was divided into Brahmins and non-Brahmins[2]. The Non-Brahmins including the untouchables were broadly divided into Valankai or right hand and Idankai or Left hand castes. The division of the society led to regular confrontations among the different sects and groups[3].

Certain rules and regulations were designed by the temples and their custodians for the peoples movement. Further these temples influenced in the state through the possession of wealth, control of markets and credit, ownership of vast estates, occupation of key position, celebration of festivals, promotion

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of arts and letters and the authority to decide the social status. The most significant expressions were the right to enter certain parts of the temple, the right to participate in certain ceremonies and the order of precedence in certain rights and festivals[4]. These were accepted by the hierarchy of communities and individuals in society[5]. Due to these ethical and civic norms of social life, the people had been forced to accept the religious customs and conventions. These were believed as the code of conduct to shape the individuals.

Social Awareness

The greatest smudge on Hinduism has been untouchability which assumed various dimensions in Travancore region. Rigid rules were deliberately erected for entry into or worship at temples, making them majority of Hindus outside the temple premises.[6] Each and every caste people had certain prohibitions on their entry into the temples.[7] In 1919, a vigorous agitation was led by T.K. Madhavan a prominent social reformer who took steps to abolish all kinds of discriminations and disabilities[8]. He made the temple entry issue as part of the Civic Rights Movement in Travancore. Further the entry of M.K. Gandhi into Congress in 1919, motivated T.K. Madhavan's struggle for social justice. Finaly the temple entry issue was made a part of the Civic Right Movement in Travancore. The Civil Right Act paved the way for the emancipation of depressed classes which helped for the abolition of untouchability and creation of equality[9].

Slowly and steadily the political leaders kept on struggling for political freedom from the British government and finally their attention was turned to liberate the untouchables[10]. The fundamental equality of all religions and the unity of God were preached by the socio-religious reformers in Tamil Nadu[11]. Later, the non-caste Hindus were inspired by the spread of English education and the formation of caste associations which led them to bargain for their legitimate status within the fold of Hinduism[12].

In addition to the efforts taken, the Vaikom Satyagraha was launched on 30th March 1924, which was an attempt to eradicate untouchabitity completely. The Congress leaders of Travancore looked for an opportunity to give wide publicity to this social evil. But the British government wanted to suppress this movement. W.H. Pitt, the European Commissioner of Police, arrested the satyagrahis. The arrested leaders realised that the absence of proper leadership would weaken the further growth of the movement. The Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee appealed to the great social reformer and Tamil Nadu

Congress Committee President E.V.Ramasamy (EVR). EVR was accompanied by his band of followers went to Vaikom. Within six days of his arrival at Vaikom he was arrested and imprisoned. The Satyagraha campaign received much popular support from several parts of Travancore and all over the country[13]. By Gandhiji's intervention on March 1925 to end Satyagraha peacefully at Vaikom resulted in a failure, as the expected result was not achieved. Later the satyagraha was withdrawn by 23rd November 1925, when the three roads were thrown open by the Travancore Durbar to the **avarnas**. Due to his sincere involvement in the Satyagraha E.V.R. was hailed as "Vaikom Hero" by his admirers[14].

The outcome of the Vaikom Satyagraha and the Suchindram Satyagraha made the Regent Rani to allow the untouchables in the Travancore State to enter the temples. As the avarnas were deprived of this concession in Trvancore, the Movement enabled the authority to open the roads to them in centres at Ambalapula, Tiruvarpu and Suchindram. The aggrieved people were inspired by the Vaikom satyagraha and therefore the suchindram satyagraha was organised on 18th January, 1926 under the leadership of M.E. Naidu, a congressman from Kottar. E.V.R. and Perumal Panikkar were actively participated in this satyagraha. Following this, Nasik Satyagraha and the Guruvayur Satyagraha had happened[15]. Further a reactionary move declared by Gandhiji in January 1933 that the Temple entry Bill must be enacted and the government should come forward to frame laws. The Temple Entry Enquiry Committee was set up in Travancore and examined 448 witnesses, among them 330 favoured and 93 were against the idea of temple entry. The Census Report gives a clearcut information about fifty seven percent of Hindus were denied the privilege of temple entry.

The Nair Service Society, as a social organisation of the Nair community organised a series of public meetings, the most important of which was held at Ochira in 1929. There T.K. Madavan delivered a lengthy speech touching all aspects of the Temple Entry Movement[16]. A number of pamphlets and booklets were brought out by T.K. Madavan in favour of temple entry. After his death in 1930 the Temple Entry Movement lost its intensity[17]. As Mahatama Gandhi was closely monitoring the progress of the movement in Travancore, he sent one of his emissaries, C.P. Ramaswami Iyer, to take definite steps to allow the **avarnas**(untouchables) into the temples[18]. By 1936, Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer was sworn in as the new Diwan in Travancore.

Temple Entry Proclamation

As the **avarna** Hindus were not allowed to step into Sri Padmanatha Swamy Temple which was the family deity of the Travancore Kings at Trivandrum, so they opted for other religions. In the words of P.C. Ray, "Orthodox Hinduism kicked away the fellows of its fold, to embrace Chirstianity and Muhammedanism"[19]. After the effects of the mass conversion, the Maharaja Sri Chitra Tirunal was enable to issue a proclamation on 24th May 1936 which stated that the roads, tanks, wells and schools of Travancore were open to all classes, irrespective of caste and creed, which was the basic step to temple entry. Later on 12th November 1936 the Maharaja on the eve of his 24th birthday issued Temple Entry Proclamation which was inspired by Queen, Sethu Lakshmi Bai and was eventually guided by diwan C.P. Ramaswami Iyer. This proclamation observed that none of the Hindus by reason of birth must be denied or neglected to enter or worship in the temple those were under the direct control of the Travancore Government. It was witnessed that about 1600 temples were opened for the **avarnas** to enter, out of which 155 were major temples, including twelve shrines of Vaikom, Varkala, Haripad, Neyyattankara, Kalady, Cape Comorin and Suchindram[20].

Impact on Tamil Nadu

In Tamil Nadu, despite being ill-treated by caste - Hindus, the depressed classes, being caught in the shackles of tradition, still remained Hindus. The depressed class people of Chidambaram in South Arcot were not permitted to enter into the Nataraja Shrine. E.V.R. a social reformer advocated Self - Respect Movement in 1925 for the temple entry of depressed class. The Self-Respectors demanded equal rights for the depressed class people. On 4th April 1929, at Eswaran temple at Erode, thirteen Self - Respecters including three Adi - Dravidas entered the temple. The campaign for temple entry in Tamil Nadu gained some momentum from the early 1930s. After the Poona Pact in 1932, there was a spurt in the temple agitation by depressed class. Both Congress and Justice Party were extending some voluntary support to conduct meetings for depressed class people. Both of them tried to educate the public in respect of the removal of untouchability and they opened temples to the depressed class[21]. The of temple entry movement in Travancore influenced the other states of South India and they too began to open temples to all the classes of people. After Guruvayur temple entry Satyagraha many meetings were held

in Tamil Nadu. The first meeting was organized on 7th January 1933 at Nagapatnam under the leadership of K.C. Subramaniyam Chettiar. The second conference was held at Chidambaram on 7th January 1933 and passed a resolution in favour of temple entry. Following that another public meeting was organized at Kumbakonam and passed a resolution is support of temple entry at Guruvayur. At Mannargudi, a meeting of both castes-Hindus and non-caste Hindus took place on 8th January 1933 and passed a resolution for temple entry. In Tamil Nadu, leaders like P.S. Sivaswami Iyer, C. Rajaji, R. Srinivasan and M.C. Rajah welcomed the similar changes in their state too. Resolutions were passed by the women conference on 28th November 1936 and the North Arcot Adi Dravida conference on 4th July 1937 demanded the opening of temples of Tamil Nadu. The visit of C. Rajaji and A. Vaithianatha Iyer to Padmanaba Swami Temple at Travancore induced the temple entry movement in Tamil Nadu. Both the leaders took are determination to open the temples to the untouchables and they held public meetings in many places to bring social justice and equality in the state[22].

In 1937, the congress took a decision to form a government. C. Rajaji was made the Prime Minister of Madras Presidency. The Madras Ordinance No. 1 of 1939 was issued in July under the guidance of C. Rajaji, which was considered as a bold step that made the depressed classes realize their long felt dream of entering the temples. On the other side, strong opposition arose to the ordinance. A special Act known as the Temple Entry Authorisation and Indemnity Act in 1939 was passed which allowed all the temples in the Madras Province to be opened for the untouchables from 8th July onwards. Following it the temples at Madurai, Tanjore, Courtallam and Tenkasi were opened for the Harijans to worship.

The outbreak of the Second World War on 3rd September 1939 and the demand for "Quit India Movement" by the Congress leaders to divert their attention from the temple entry movement issue. The Maharajah of Ettayapuram opened his two family temples of Lord Siva and Vishnu to the untouchables on 21st September 1945. Following this the Thiagaraja Swami Temple at Tiruvanur and Nellaiappar Swami Temple at Tirunelveli were kept open for untouchables. On 11th January 1947, Jagajeevanram, the Labour Minister of the Interim Central Government entered along with the untouchables and worshipped the deities, which motivated the seekers of temple entry. As Gandhiji promissed earlier, he entered the Meenakshi Temple with some Harijan leaders like V.I. Muniswami Pillai on 3rd February 1946[23]. To rectify the drawbacks of the previous Act of 1939, the Madras Temple Entry Authorization Act of 1947,

was passed and implemented with effect from 1947. This very Act gave the authority to all classes of Hindus to enter each and every temple in the province. On the day of its implementation, 148 temples including that of Tirupati Venkateswara temple were opened. In 1948 under the Chief Ministeriship of Omandur Ramasami Reddiar, a bill to rectify the anomalies of Act of 1947 was passed. This Act gave the right of temple entry to all the untouchables in all the temples[24].

Conclusion

Even after the hardships and passing different acts, the untouchables are not equally treated and respected to enter the temples. It was noticed recently on 24th May 1993 that some backward and depressed class members were not allowed to enter into the sanctum sanctorum of the Ranganatha Swami Temple at Srirangam. With the support of the orthodox people and the political parties the police arrested 31 depressed class members. All these incidents shows that the temple entry process has not become complete successful.

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The Legacy Of The Justice Party

Prof. Dr. A. Subbian*

Introduction

The Justice Party, which emerged during the bustle of the First World War admirably possessed all the characteristic features, attributed to modern a political party. A body of 'non-Brahmin gentlemen of position and influence assembled at the historic Victoria Public Hall in Madras on 20th November 1916, as it has been noted already and resolved to start a political organization under the name of 'South Indian Liberal Federation' for promoting by their joint endeavours, the political interests of the non-Brahmin communities. The Federation has a President, four Vice-Presidents and a Treasurer as its office-bearers. Its first President was P.Rajarathna Mudaliar, P.Ramarayaningar, P. Theagaraya Chetti, K.G. Ahmedthamby Marcoir and M.G.Arogiasami Pillai were its Vice-Presidents. P.M. Sivagnana Mudaliar, P.Narayanaswamy Mudaliar, Mohamad Usman and M.Govindarajulu Naidu served as its secretaries. The Treasurer was one G. Narayanaswami Chettiar. The heart and soul of the party was Dr.T.M. Nair who did nothold any office.

However, as stated earlier, he took up the responsibility of editing *Justice,* the English daily of the party. P.Theagaraya Chetti who was also the secretary-cum-manager of the South Indian People's Association (the Joint stock company) was the pivot of the Justice Party. The journals of the party run by that Joint stock company owed their continued circulation inspite of financial stress and strain, only due to his resourcefulness.

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The Objects of The Party

The South Indian Liberal Federation declared its objects in October 1917. They were:

(a) to promote the educational, social, economic, political, material and moral progress of all communities of South India other than Brahmins.

(b) to discuss public questions and make true and timely representations to the government the views and interests of the people of South India, with the object of safeguarding and promoting their interests;

(c) to disseminate by public lectures, by distribution of literature and by other means, thereby to create public opinion.

The above development is to be noted merely as a quantitative increase in the relevant institutions, because qualitatively it still remains to be seen how far they have in fact extended in geographical distribution reservation, or been diffused throughout the Madras Presidency, so as to improve the face of justice in the country.

Nevertheless, the said development has brought forth certain tendencies favourable to indigenous efforts to realize the ideals of a state based on the rule of law and also to efforts for structural changes aimed at the goal of a more just society, for several reasons.

1. First, with the spread of awareness of legal organizations, more possibilities have been opened up for the target groups of legal luminaries of the backward communities – namely, the poor who are ignorant of the law to obtain legal services and thus the opportunity to receive justice.
2. Second., there has been a subsequent effect on governmental authorities and legal practitioners alike, both having been rendered more sensitive and responsive to the legal needs of the poor. And, third, the growth of these legal aid organizations has provided increased opportunities for making the laws more effective and for institutionalizing all forms of participation in this process; simultaneously, this growth has also intensified efforts towards law reform and educational reforms in Madras Presidency.

At the conceptual level, the original idea for the establishment of an egalitarian society with a clear orientation towards the interests of the people was brought to the fore, for it was at its second Non-Brahmin confederation held on January 1919.

The significance of this intensified struggle for *the rule of law* was put in the following terms by Lev:

For the others, amongst them professional lawyers, intellectuals and other people committed to further change, a state based on *the rule of law* means a more over-all re-arrangement of the Indian state to expand the benefits in the form of security, orderliness, protection of personal rights and procedural equality through the prosperous people in the cities to the poor in cities and villages. Due to this liberal perspective, but in a moderate radical context, there emerged new legal aid programs, reservation in educational institution, pressures on traditional legal doctrines.

Meanwhile, quite apart from the three above-mentioned conditioning factors, theoreticians and practitioners of law like Sir. A.T.Pannerselvam and Dr. Sir. A.Ramaswamy Mudaliar in developing the view it as a humanitarian response to a demand for help, an essential prerequisite to the functioning and integrity of the system of justice. In particular, these advocates see four specific social objectives being furthered by legal aid; 1) the establishment of a unified, nationwide legal system and educational awareness; 2) the development of a larger sense of responsibility to the public on the part of government officials and bureaucrats; 3) the stimulation of greater participation by the public in the process of governing; and 4) the strengthening of the legal profession itself.

To summarize the main points of this section of my paper, legal aid organizations have potentials and limitations in the performance of their roles, the realization of the above objectives (or hopes), the fulfilment of the public's legal needs, and educational needs and the orientation of the legal profession itself. These, however, are not the most decisive factors determining the role of the legal aid organizations. This is so because there still remain many factors obstructing, factors which are both cultural, such as the values existing in the society, and structural, in the form of unequal command and control of the resources available in that society – including legal resources and educational reforms.

As such, this means that structural educational opportunities shall consist of a series of programmes, aimed at bringing about changes, both through legal means and in other lawful ways, in the relationships which form the bases of social life, towards more parallel and balanced patterns. This is the essential pre-condition for the development of education which will provide justice for the majority of the middle class, by the Justice Party and the Dravidian Movement.

At the operational level, structural legal aid must reach out to rural as well as urban areas; it must actively search out those cases to defend or initiate which most involve the public's collective interest, and those cases, undertaken in the interests of the poor, which create the opportunity for providing education to that broad public of labourers, and peasants.

Equality in Education

The path of distribution in education really means the realization of social justice in the field of education. This noble idea is also consistent with our ideal of upholding basic human rights, because through education we can make people aware of their rights and obligations. The world of education will open people's eyes to the environment around them, and if that environment is unjust they will react. The swiftness of someone's reaction is largely determined by the level of their ability to read and write.

It is multi-disciplinary in the sense that the educationist must develop talents and techniques far beyond those of traditional pattern. For example, he must utilize existing social science research of relevance to the broad social categories his clients represent and, where none exists, he must stimulate such research or undertake it himself. In point of fact, this second conceptualization calls for the creation of an entirely new type of educational and all professional, one who will be:

1. an advocate of collective demands and group interests, both in courts and in legislative, administrative and all other institutions;
2. an educator, helping to develop community awareness and knowledge of relevant laws and helping to train community para-professionals;
3. a critic of existing or proposed legislation and administrative actions which impinge on the human rights of impoverished groups;
4. a law reformer, asserting claims for changes in legislation and in the structure and processes of government; and

5. a jurist, developing new jurisprudential concepts needed to realize the right to development of all individuals within the society (and not just the right to development of that society as an abstraction whose needs and desires are defined solely by a tiny, insulated, and self – perpetuating political elite).

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Temple Entry Bill Of C.S. Ranga Iyer, 1933-1934

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The purpose of this paper is to highlight the role of C.S.Ranga Iyer in the national movement and social reform movement, the introduction of his temple entry bill and the fate of the bill in the Central Legislative Assembly and the stand of Madras Presidency in this regard. C.S.Ranga Iyer was born in a respectable Tamil Brahmin family of Chittoor, now in Kerala State.In his student life he was highly influenced by the writings of Western scholars like Tennyson, Milton, Byron and Carlyle. At the same time, the political ideas and activities of the Indian National leaders like Lala Lajput Rai, C.R.Das, Ali Brothers, Aurobindo Ghosh and M.K.Gandhi had great impact on him and he was drawn into the national movement.

Madras and New Delhi served as the principal centres of his political activity. He started his political career in the year 1920. He vehemently attacked the British policy of exploiting the Indians. He appealed to both moderate and extremists to accept the leadership of Gandhi and to fight for the liberation of the nation from alien hegemony. He insisted and even addressed at many meetings the immediate need of swaraj. In 1920, the British authority arrested him and confined him to Agra jail for one year. In 1923, he contested the election to the Central Legislative Assembly.He represented Rohilkhand and Kumaon in the Central Assembly for eleven years. He visited England three times in 1927, 1929 and 1933.The period of his greatest political activity was between 1920 and 1935.

He contributed a number of articles to English newspapers, and even published books. These works revealed his political and social activities for the cause of all Indians, irrespective of religion and caste. Of his works, the notable were 'Father India', 'Voice from Prison' and 'India, Peace or War'. 'Father India' was written as a retort to 'Mother India' of Catherine Mayo, whom Ranga Iyer depicted as an American devil mind and evil propagandist. In 'Voice from Prison', he appealed to all the nationalists to carry on the struggle for freedom

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on a single platform. His work 'India, Peace or War' traced the major political events and trends in India since 1930s.In toto, Ranga Iyer was a liberal nationalist and advocated constitutional and non-violent struggle. He wished that the freedom of the nation should be attained in stages like provincial autonomy, self-rule and dominion status.

A Great Social Reformer

He was equally a great social reformer of South India. He condemned communalism and many other evil practices in Indian society. He viewed that fanaticism was a great hindrance to the attainment of freedom of the nation. He condemned the practice of child marriage and even remarked the *purdah* was a curse. He stressed the importance of education and viewed that education alone would make them real Indians. He opined that the untouchables should be given voting right.[1]

Introduction of Temple Entry Bill

The hold of the *sanatanists* gradually weakened over temples owing to the Hindu Religious Endowments (H.R.E.) Acts and the propaganda made by E.V.Ramasamy demanding boycott of temple on the ground of inequality practised there. On the other side, the growth of rationalist movement urged the Brahmins to move towards a new set up where inequality was discouraged. Above all, since the formation of Justice Ministry, agitation was a common factor on the social ground, demanding education, right of equality, public right and even right to entry into temples. These factors made the Brahmin leaders to think about the numerical importance of the untouchables to the national solidarity against the imperialistic attitude of British administrators. Vaikom and Suchindram Satyagrahas proved the fact that the *sanatanists* could not withstand the formidable and invincible force of the majority people. [2]

In order to enable the untouchables to enter the Hindu temples, P.Subbarayan proposed to introduce the Temple Entry Bill in the Madras Legislative Council in 1932, but sanction to it was refused on the grounds that it was far-reaching in implication for enactment by a provincial legislature.[3] Following the Central Legislature's rejection of Subbarayan's temple entry bill, C.S.Ranga Iyer tabled in the Central Legislative Assembly yet another bill known as Temple Entry Disabilities Removal Bill(Reproduction of P.Subbarayan's Madras Temple Entry Bill) on March 24, 1933 which would

allow the untouchables to enter temples. Soon the orthodox Hindu representatives in the Central Legislature opposed and even adopted obstructive tactics. Incidentally, K.P.Thamban of the Nilgris opposed the bill as ultravires of the Indian Legislature. However, R.K.Shanmugam Chetti, a non-Brahmin leader and President of the Assembly asserted that under the provisions of the Government of India Act, the Assembly had power to legislate all persons and places in British India.[4] However, Vasudeva Rajah of Kollengode opposed it as it was against the solemn pledges of Queen Victoria and her successors not to interfere in matters of religion.[5] G.Krishnamachariar, an orthodox representative of Tanjore-cum-Tiruchirapalli quoted that the depressed classes did not want it and their leader B.R.Ambedkar expressed the same opinion. He viewed that M.K.Gandhi was the backbone of this bill. Therefore, it was a struggle between M.K.Gandhi and his sympathizers on one side and caste-Hindus on the other side.[6] Finally, Sir Henry Haig, the Government spokesman in his remarks in the Assembly viewed that the provisions of the bill were impracticable and inequitable and it would lead to serious disorder. He advocated on behalf of Government for methods of persuasion,by a gradual education and a development of public opinion in favour of desired end rather than by endeavouring to force on the country at a single blow, a measure which the country had recorded so clear and unmistakable a verdict of disapproval.[7]

So the bill was circulated for public opinion from 24 August 1933.[8] The Government of India, as per its decision on 18 September 1933 despatched the copy of C.S.Ranga Iyer's bill to the Government of Madras for public opinion and its final report. The Madras Government in November 1933 issued the references of the bill, to the High Court, all selected officials, non-official associations, including all Hindu legislators.[9] It also urged all the collectors to take special steps to obtain opinions from the socio-religious reformers.[10] Eventually, after receiving public opinion for and against the bill the Madras Government drafted its own report and expressed that the bill had widened the gap between the caste-Hindus and the depressed classes. Further it expected disunion and bitterness and perpetual unrest among Hindus. If the bill was passed into a law, there might be serious disturbances to public tranquility and it would lead to internecine clash between the reformers and the believers and also between the caste-Hindus and depressed classes. Thus the objection to the bill was greater and more serious especially from the point of view of law and order.[11]

Stand of Madras Presidency

Contrary to Madras Government's opinion, to show the mass support in favour of Temple Entry Bill of C.S.Ranga Iyer and Abolition of Untouchability Disabilities Bill of M.C. Rajah, propaganda meetings and conferences were organized in various parts of Tamil districts since the accord of Governor-General for the introduction of these bills in the Central Legislative Assembly on 23 January 1933. On 19 February 1933, E.V.R. at a meeting in Salem in favour of C.S.Ranga Iyer's bill advocated the temple entry for the untouchables and caste-Hindus on equal footing.[12] The eighth session of the All-India's Women Conference held at Egmore in Madras on 21 October 1933 passed a resolution which whole-heartedly registered its support to the temple entry bill of C.S.Ranga Iyer.[13] At a meeting of Women Indian Association held on 28 Occtober 1933 at Coonnoor, the women delegates unanimously supported the temple entry bill and voiced their feelings of temple entry for all people who profess Hindu faith.[14] The Indian National Social Conference held at Madras on 29 December 1933 also passed a resolution approving the principles of temple entry bill of C.S.Ranga Iyer and requested the members of Legislative Assembly and the government to pass it with suitable modifications.[15]

Fate of the Bill

As the report concerning public opinion was not received from all the provinces for his bill in time, on 23 August 1934 M.C.Rajah withdrew his Abolition of Untouchability bill in favour of Hindu Temple Entry Disabilities Removal Bill of C.S.Ranga Iyer which received report about public opinion from various provinces. Accordingly, the bill of C.S.Ranga Iyer was taken for further consideration in the Central Assembly.[16] Meanwhile, the Government's decision to dissolve the Central Assembly and order for fresh election resulted in a sudden change in the attitude of the Congress members in the Central Assembly towards this bill.[17] Since then, the Congress leaders were afraid to face the electorate on the untouchability measure and hesitated to make temple entry of untouchables a major issue.[18] For a while, the Congress leaders openly accepted the views of Untouchable leaders who were against the temple entry bill of C.S.Ranga Iyer and subsequently decided to scuttle the bill with the aim of getting votes from both the Untouchables and *sanatanists* in the election. They quoted the views of B.R.Ambedkar against temple entry. This change of Congress attitude was very clear when G.K.Devadhar, the president of Maharastra H.S.S. indicated the relaxation in the stand of the Congress on temple entry to

Untouchables.[19] Even the *sanatanist* members of the Legislature wrote to M.K.Gandhi that they were not in favour of temple entry and therefore Congress members were for the unity and integrity of the nation.[20] When they approached Rajaji to know the stand of Congress in the coming election, he viewed that Congress would not approach the people for claiming votes for the support of the temple entry bill.[21] Moreover, speaking at the local Bar Association in Madurai, he stated that Congress would not involve in any measure which would impair its interest in election. It obviously showed that the Congress took double stand in C.S.Ranga Iyer's bill.[22]

Negatively, this Congress stand irritated C.S.Ranga Iyer and he launched a bitter attack on the Congress and its leaders. On 23 August 1934 in the Central Legislature, he openly condemned the Congress for indulging in 'humbug' politics and ignoring the question of untouchables. He also deplored in the Legislature that prominent Congress leaders who called on him so often promising him their support to the bill had now gone back on their words as they were not bold enough to face the public opinion lest they should fail to secure votes in the coming election.[23] He quoted Rajaji's signed statement that the Congress candidates should go to the electorate on some well-defined political issues and leave aside the question of temple entry and untouchablility, these being religious matters.[24] Proceeding further C.S.Ranga Iyer said : "By his statement Rajaji had driven the last nail on the coffin of the temple entry bill while the same Rajaji and other Congressmen earlier went to Delhi session from door to door begging for the support of the Assembly members." He further remarked that 'either the Congressmen were cowards or they had no conviction in the bill'. He added, "In the name of non-violence and religion, Congressmen had side-tracked the vital temple entry issue. They were slaves and they should remember that the Hindu religion was not a 'humbug' like Congress politics and God was greater than M.K.Gandhi and these religious questions were bigger than Congress planks.[25] C.S.Ranga Iyer concluded that when the community is ablaze, when the opposition is uncompromising, there was no use of forcing a piece of legislation like his Bill through the House even if there was a chance for it.[26] Thereupon on the united opposition shown by the Government, *sanatanists* and Congressmen to the Bill, C.S.Ranga Iyer withdrew it on 23 August 1934 [27] and he appealed to the *sanatanist* leaders to build separate temples near their own house.[28]

View of E.V. Ramasamy and Kudi Arasu

E.V.Ramasamy wrote a scathing editorial condemning Congress. Blaming Gandhi and Rajagopalachari for 'consigning Ranga Iyer's bill to the abyss and burying it there'. He pointed out that the money collected by the Harijan Sevak Sangh had gone to fill Congress party coffers. The editorial further remarked that for all its declared concern for untouchables, the Congress in Madras had actually fielded a Brahmin candidate against V.I.Munusamy Pillay, an untouchable leader, who contested the elections to the Central Legislature as an independent candidate and defeated him. A fair recompense, indeed, concluded the editorial, to those who had saved Gandhi's life during his 'epic' fast. Another ***Kudi Arasu*** editorial noted that, in spite of having ostensibly withdrawn from Congress, Gandhi thought it fit to instruct Congressmen to withdraw support for Ranga Iyer's bill.[29] ***Kudi Arasu*** carried Ambedkar's condemnation of Gandhi and expressed its own support for the opinions expressed by the latter.[30]

Conclusion

Due to the Central Legislature's rejection of Subbarayan's temple-entry bill, ,Ranga Iyer initiated the same legislative measure in the Central Assembly. While this measure earned the opprobrium of Ambedkar, who felt the bill did not go far enough, and the criticism of E.V.Ramasamy, Gandhi enlisted Rajagopalachari and Birla to propagate its contents widely and secure the approval of Congress legislators for its passage. Of course, this proved none too easy and the bill, though tabled in early 1933, was taken up for discussion in the Central Assembly only in August 1934. Immediately thereafter, it was decided to gather public opinion on the bill. A frustrated Ranga Iyer finally moved a resolution to have the bill forwarded to a Select Committee. At that time, the Government of India announced its decision to dissolve the Central Legislature and hold elections, Congress with an eye on the voters, amongst whom were a number of orthodox Hindus, decided to withdraw its support to the bill. Rajagopalachari made it clear that in its election propaganda, the Congress would limit its concerns to constitutional matters. This volte face did not serve the Congress well for the untouchable leaders expressed resentment at the sudden and clearly opportunistic withdrawal on its part. Meanwhile, Congressmen went ahead to proclaim their consent for untouchables and cleverly elided in their addresses the 'slip' they had engineered between sentiment and practice with regard to temple entry.

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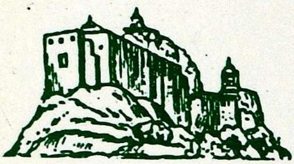

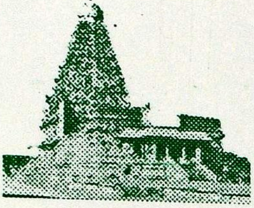

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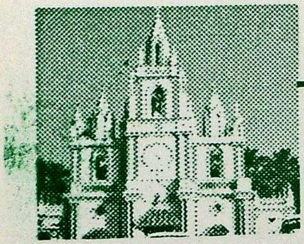
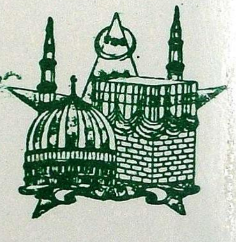
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